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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["MRS. HILL'S HUSBAND," PROCEEDED CONNIE, WITH HER EYES FIXED ON HUGH'S, "IS YOURSELF!"]

LADY RAVENHILL'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XX.

THIS was the most awful day that Nellie Hill ever remembered; it was like a nightmare to her afterwards for years.

The gentlemen dispersed to smoke or play billiards, the ladies gathered shivering round the two great fires in the drawing-room with books and work, but they neither opened book nor put in needle; they did nothing but talk of the murder.

Who could have done it? Why they did it? When they did it, and with what?

How frightfully Lord Ravenhill took it to heart, and no wonder! It was terrible for him, and yet he was so situated he could say nothing. And many remarked how determined he was to go with Mr. Monckton. Of course it would be awfully painful for him, but it was easy to see that he would leave no stone unturned to bring the wretch to justice, if the murderer was above ground. He would find him!

Nellie felt that she was becoming quite

hysterical as she listened to all this. She would disgrace herself before everyone if she did not retire.

Mary Fortescue was most anxious to accompany her, and, in spite of her, followed her up to her room, and closing the door after her said,—

"Nellie, this is all too much for you. You are so excitable, and easily wrought up. I assure you, just now your eyes looked as if they were starting out of your head. Lie down and rest, and let me bathe your forehead."

"I think I shall go mad!" said Nellie, sinking on the sofa, and burying her face in the cushion.

"My dear, I did not like to say so, but now you have mentioned it yourself, you really did look as if you were on the way to Hanwell several times this morning!" said her friend, taking a seat beside her. "I think it is enough to try anyone's nerves, living in the house with your husband under a feigned name. It is like living in a powder-mill! Why don't you tell him, Nell, to make everything right. He is such a nice fellow!"

"A nice fellow!" echoed Nellie, with a groan. "That's all you know about him, my dear child! But you are right! I mean to tell him who I am!"

"You do?" jumping up. "Oh, Nellie, I'm so glad!"

"Yes, but it won't make any difference."

"What!"

"Not the least; and Molly, dear, you must tell your aunt, Mrs. Monckton, all about it. No one else need know that Mrs. Hill is Lady Ravenhill, and I should like to go home to-morrow. I can't stay here—indeed I can't!"

"Is it this shocking murder that has upset you?"

"Yes, partly."

"Of course if you like we will go, but it seems such a pity, with everything going on so smoothly, and his liking you so much, not to stay and make friends."

"Make friends! You don't know what you are saying, Molly!"—wringing her hands. "Make friends! If you say that again, I don't know what I shall do to you!"—excitedly.



"My dear Nellie!" said her companion, soothingly, "you really are not at all well! I'll get you a composing draught, and you must take a good sleep. I'll draw the curtains and let no one in."

"Yes, a composing draught!" Nellie caught at the idea with avidity—anything to drown thought, to kill the agonizing truth that seemed to be eating its way through her brain. "Go!—be quick! Get it at once!" waving her friend feverishly out of the room.

The door had scarcely closed on Miss Fortescue when it opened on Mrs. Derwent, who came in bland and smiling.

"Ah! you are quite knocked up, my dear, and no wonder. It is too shocking to be thought of!" and lowering her voice, "how awful for him. He is frightfully out up, and no wonder! His face was absolutely grey at breakfast. Did you remark? And how his hand was shaking!"

"Don't speak of it! I'm sick of the subject," said Nellie, frantically. "I have a splitting headache, Mrs. Derwent, if you will excuse me," turning her face away from the light. "I want to go to sleep."

"Of course, certainly. I only came in, my dear, to tell you that, if quite convenient, I will take that cheque now. I want to send it off this morning."

"It is not convenient. If I was going to pay you it would not be for a week at least as it is," putting her hand to her throbbing throat.

"You don't mean to say you are going to back out of the bargain!" almost screamed Mrs. Derwent, half rising in her chair.

"Circumstances have altered the case now."

"What! since yesterday?" incredulously.

"Yes. You may tell him how, and when, you please. I am going to acknowledge the truth at last!"

"This is a very strange, sudden fancy. What is the reason of it, may I ask?" contemptuously.

"No, you may not ask; but be satisfied that there is an amply good and sufficient reason!"

"Has it anything to do with *Rose Walker*?" said Mrs. Derwent, leaning over her and whispering in her ear, but the pretty little shell-like ear heard no more than that, for Lady Ravenhill had fainted.

She lay as if she was dead, without breath or movement, and as if she were marble. The door, which was slightly ajar, was pushed in by Mary with her foot, Mary carrying a bottle in one hand, and a mixture in a glass in the other. She barely raised her eyes from the latter till she was beside the sofa.

"What is this?" she cried. "What is the matter? You have killed her! She is dead!"—confronting Mrs. Derwent with horror.

"Killed her!—what nonsense! She has fainted, that's all. Dead! rising and moving towards the door, "I wish she was!" she muttered to herself, and with this Christian and charitable wish she calmly departed.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE snow had ceased to fall, the ground was hard and crisp under foot, and a leaden grey sky overhead, as Mrs. Derwent stepped out of a side door about three o'clock in the afternoon, and, well wrapped up in a long sealskin coat, a white cloud muffling the lower part of her face, a large muff in her hands, and strong boots on her feet, started off alone down the long, glaring white avenue, which bore the track of only one conveyance on its virgin surface—the mark of the dogcart and horse which had taken Mr. Monckton, Lord Ravenhill and another gentleman to the dismal scene.

It was this very trap and party that she wished to meet and waylay, and she found that she had timed them most accurately, for she was not more than half a mile from the Grange gates, when she beheld a black object coming rapidly towards her, which on nearer inspection, resolved itself into a big, bay, high-

stepping horse, a red wheeled dog-cart, and three very cold-looking, silent, muffled-up men.

Conny made signals with her muff, and brought them to a halt without loss of time.

"Has he been found?" she inquired, stepping off the side-walk. "Any clue to the murderer?" she asked in her high, shrill voice.

"Not the faintest! Most mysterious, inexplicable, business I've ever had to do with!" replied Mr. Monckton over his woollen comforter. "What in the world brings you out such a day, Mrs. Derwent, in the name of all that's mad? It's freezing harder than ever."

"Oh, it's not nearly so bad walking. I'm quite warm. Anything is better than coddling oneself over the fire all day. Hugh, you look frozen. Get down, and walk home with me," she added, with a playful, imperative smile.

Hugh seemed in no great hurry to accept her invitation, but the horse began to fret, having his head set towards his stable, and Mr. Monckton said, impatiently,—

"Well, if you are going, look sharp, Ravenhill, and let us get on," and Ravenhill had not the moral courage to leave Mrs. Derwent standing alone in the snow; so, cursing his fate, he unwashed himself from the fur rug, and jumped down, and in another second the red-wheeled dog-cart had bowed away, and they were alone.

"What has brought you out, Conny?" he said, irritably. "I know you are as fond of your ease and the fireside as any woman I know! You have some motive—out with it!"

"Can I not take a walk in the snow without some motive besides exercise?" she said, pettishly. "Let us walk on, at any rate. I want to talk to you. I suppose you were at the inquiry?"

"Yes," he replied, with a shudder.

"And saw the bodies?" she continued, with a craving for the horrible.

To this she received no direct reply.

"Have they no idea who the murderer is?"

"None, so far."

"Have you?"

"I! In the name of Heaven how could I have any suspicion of any one?"

"Oh, you see, you know her so well," glancing at him furtively out of the corner of her eye. "And you might be able to guess at some one's motive."

"I am not good at guessing," he answered, stiffly, ignoring the first part of her speech.

"Are you not? Can you guess who Mrs. Hill is?" she said, impressively.

"No guessing required in her case. I know all about her—as much as I want to, at any rate," correcting himself.

"I'm not so sure of that!" with an affected little laugh.

"I know you don't mind my smoking," he said, producing his cigar-case, and leisurely selecting a weed with a coolness that aggravated her beyond measure.

"No, not the least. I sometimes take a cigarette myself when I am not among such a lot of old tabbies as there are at the Grange. But about Mrs. Hill—she is separated from her husband."

"I believe so," carelessly blowing a cloud into the freezing air.

"Have you any idea who he is?"

"Mr. Hill, I suppose; but I really neither know nor care," he answered, with well-assured indifference.

"Don't you? Well, I have come out in the snow to tell you all about him. That was my motive for rooting myself out of my comfortable chair in front of a splendid fire."

"Awfully good of you, I'm sure!" ironically; "but I really don't see how the news concerns me!"

"It concerns you very much—no one more so. Stop!" putting her hand suddenly on his arm. "Take your cigar out of your mouth, and cease smoking for the moment. Prepare

yourself for a mental shock," she added, as he stood before her in the avenue, gazing at her in silence, and wondering if she had gone out of her mind. "Mrs. Hill's husband is," she proceeded, weighing every word, and keeping her eyes steadily fixed on his, and her hand still on his sleeve—"yourself!" giving him a little push. "Now does he concern you?" with a triumphant nod. "I see you don't believe me," she continued, as he still stood staring at her without moving a muscle of his countenance; "but I can soon prove my words. Nellie Hill is but Eleanor Ravenhill. Observe, she has kept her own name, considerably cut down—rather a clever idea, was it not?"

Still he never moved or spoke.

"I see you are hard to convince," she proceeded, gravely; "but I have the whole story at my fingers' ends. After your marriage she went abroad to some German baths. She had an operation for cataract successfully performed, and entirely recovered her sight. She took up her abode with the Fortescues, where she has been living for the last three years. A kind of comfortable vegetable existence, like a slug in a head of cabbage, until fortune, bad or ill, threw you in her way. Strange, was it not?"

"But she could not be the same—it is impossible. You are wrong altogether," said Lord Ravenhill, at last.

"Did you ever see her face?" demanded Conny, judicially.

"No; she always wore a shade."

"Her height and her hair—were they different from Mrs. Hill's?"

"No."

It struck him now with a sudden shock that they were precisely the same. The idea had never, of course, occurred to him before, and now it came on him with full force, and for the first time he began to think there was some slight probability in Mrs. Derwent's extraordinary story.

"I have long had my suspicions about her. I knew that there was something in the background we none of us could get at. I sounded the Fortescues in vain; I sounded herself. It seemed so very flaky, a pretty young woman like that having no belongings. She, however, made me a speech once that set me thinking and thinking, till I got the clue in my hand."

"And what was that?" he asked, impatiently.

"I was speaking of your marrying again, as your wife, from all accounts, could not live long, and she—it was on Seabeach pier, we had been watching the *Constantia* taking you off to Norway—she went away a few yards, and then, as if struck by a sudden thought, came back, looking very white and determined, and said, 'As long as I live Lord Ravenhill will never marry again.'"

(This was not precisely what she had said, but Mrs. Derwent was not particular.)

"And how did you find the clue, as you call it?"

"It was an envelope, a letter I saw her open. She dropped the cover in the post-office, and there was her name in full, to care of Mrs. Hill. She hunted about for it everywhere, but in vain. I had it tight in my muff—and here it is if you like to look at it," tendering a blue business-looking envelope, which her companion eagerly seized and read.

"It must be as you say," he said, taking off his hat, and passing his hand through his hair in a vague bewildered manner. "This is from our family solicitor. I know his fist out of a thousand. Does—does she know that you have discovered who she is?"

"She does," she answered, promptly, "and that is one thing that I can't understand. When I told her yesterday she was in a most fearful state of mind; she was nearly frantic; she all but went on her knees to me to keep her secret; she offered me anything I chose to name. She said all she wanted was to get away and hide herself, and never come across you again."

"And why?"

"How can I tell? But she did not take long to change her mind," contemptuously. "This morning when I went into her room she looked as if she was going crazy—and I believe she is. Her eyes were like those of some hunted creature that had got an awful fright, as if they had seen some horrible vision. Her face was the colour of this snow," kicking it with her neat double-soled boot. "Her hands were trembling and her voice was husky. She looked as if she were either going to do one of two things—go mad or die. She informed me that she now did not care whether anyone knew who she was or not—rather a difference from the day before. She said she herself would tell Mrs. Monckton. I think, between you and me, it's her mind, not her body, that is affected. She is quite off her head—take my word for it."

"And how do you account for it?" he asked, huskily.

"I can only give a guess," said Conny, looking down with an affectation of modesty.

"But your guesses are always so excellent," ironically.

"Well, remember," lowering her voice, "that it is a mere guess."

"Yes, I quite understand; let me have it, all the same."

"I believe she thinks that you—"

"Yes, be quick! That I—that—out with it!"

"You murdered Rosie Waller!"

CHAPTER XXII.

LORD RAVENHILL recoiled two steps from Mrs. Derwent, as she made known her guess—and what a guess!

"You know you don't mean what you say," he said, at last. "You are only trifling with me, Conny; for the sake of the old friendship tell me that you don't mean that! Think again—think of some other reason. Surely no one would dream—unless they were insane—that I would take the life of a helpless woman and child, deliberately, in cold blood!"

"I have told you what I believe she thinks, and am a stupider woman than I imagine if you don't discover that I have made a good guess! I suppose it will be as well to keep the little discovery secret—I mean, for the present. You don't want to have the whole house from garret to cellar discussing the romantic episode of the lost peeress open-mouthed. The murder is ample for them to talk about at present; this new bit of news would be an unnecessary extravagance, an *embarras de richesse*!" laughing, as she ran up the hall-door steps.

"Yes, yes—say nothing about it," he answered, hurriedly overtaking her; "but Conny, how cold, and cynical, and hard you are. I sometimes think you have no more heart or feeling than a stone."

"What is the good of having a heart?" she answered, lightly tossing off her wraps, as she stood in the oak-panelled entrance hall. "It is only a bother, and leads one to do foolish things, and makes one soft and tender-hearted."

"No one can accuse you of being that, at any rate," indignantly.

"No, I never give or take quarter, my lord," she said, emphatically. "Come to the tea-room, it's half-past four, and have a cup to warm you. You look perished!"

"No, thank you, I would rather not. I must be alone for a while to try and realize all you have told me within the last half-hour. 'You are serious, Conny,' he added, sternly. 'You are not playing me a trick! It will be the worse day's work you ever did if you are.'

"Serious! Of course I am serious; but believe me or not, as you like. Please yourself, and you please me!" So saying, with a jaunty nod of her head, Mrs. Derwent went off in search of a cup of afternoon tea.

In the meanwhile Lady Ravenhill, recovered from her faint, thanks to the composing draught, had slept all the afternoon, and awoke about half-past five, revived and refreshed. Youth is wonderful! Sleep is a great

restorer; a cup of tea, a good strong one, repairs the energies, and Nellie looked more like herself than she had done for two days.

She had a great deal to do, to think of, she said to herself, as she sat up with her hands to her head. For one thing she was going to write to her husband; she meant to see him, and tell him that she shared his guilty secret. Why should she keep it locked up in her breast alone? She would denounce him to-night, and leave Monckton to-morrow. She got up, drew out her writing-case, and penned the following note in a clear, bold hand,—

"Meet me in the library at half-past nine.—

"E. R."

—and ringing for Browne, told her to give it at once to Lord Ravenhill's valet. The library would be empty; no one ever entered it of an evening.

The young people were too much absorbed in a noisy, round game, and their elders deep in the most scientific whist. When not a sound was to be heard, nor a piano note, her little missive despatched, Nellie gave orders to Browne with regard to packing for an early departure, and desired her to lay out her diamonds, and her black velvet dress.

For once she would dress as befitting her rank; for once wear the family diamonds, before she again disappeared into middle-class obscurity. No one would know who she was, excepting four people—Mrs. Derwent, Mary, Mrs. Monckton, and her husband; her unwonted magnificence would be put down to a large dinner-party that was taking place that evening, in honour of a neighbouring bride and bridegroom.

Nellie dressed early, and could not help being astonished at her own appearance. Her cheeks glowed as if they had been rouged; the diamonds on her neck were no brighter than her eyes, which shone with feverish brilliancy; her black velvet dress, made by Worth, and trimmed with old point d'Alençon, fitted her tall, slight figure like a glove; and when she was equipped with a diamond necklace, diamond solitaire earrings, diamond bracelets, diamond stars in her hair, she looked like the Queen of Diamonds, and elicited a little exclamation of admiration and amazement from Mrs. Monckton, who occupied a comfortable chair in front of the fire in her boudoir, whilst she awaited the first ring announcing the arrival of her guests. The good old lady was also turning over in her mind the marvellous piece of news her niece has brought her that morning—it seemed incredible—and yet, here in the doorway, stood Mrs. Hill herself, just blazing with diamonds, and looking every inch Lady Ravenhill.

"I've heard all about it, my dear!" said Mrs. Monckton, rising with unusual alacrity. "Is it possible, is it true what Mary tells me?" taking both her young friend's hands in hers, and leading her back to the fire with unusual warmth of manner.

"It is quite true, Mrs. Monckton, but please don't let the public into our secret."

"Certainly not, my dear, but they must know sometime, and why not now?" said the old lady, who would dearly have enjoyed the éclat of announcing the news.

"It will never be made public with my sanction," said her ladyship, firmly, resting one foot on the fender, and looking into the fire.

"What!" with a little shriek. "You don't mean to say that now you have your sight, and are such a pretty girl, and so much admired, and such a favourite, that you are not going to take up your proper position in the country? Surely you are not going to remain incognito all your days—as Mrs. Hill—a nobody?"

"Perhaps not as Mrs. Hill, but as some other nobody," said Nellie, bitterly.

"You could not mean it!—ah!—You must be out of your mind! My dear girl, where can you have a happier home? Where will you find a handsomer or better husband? How thunderstruck he will be, and how

pleased! It sounds like a fairy tale or Arabian Nights, your making his acquaintance, and taking him by storm under a feigned name. It is easy to see that he admires you immensely."

"That may be, but it does not signify," said Nellie, turning away. "I will never have anything to say to him, never pass a night under the same roof after to-night, never speak to him after to-day."

"Tut, tut, my dear, this is all nonsense! Once he finds out who you are he will never let you go—he is not such a fool—he will carry you off to Ravenwood!"

"No, he won't," with a hasty, abrupt gesture.

"Well, wait and you will see," cheerfully.

"He dare not do it, he dare not dictate to me in any way, and I repudiate him altogether."

"Ah, this is bad! this is jealousy. Poor Rosie!" with a heavy sigh. "How little I guessed who you were when I told you her history; but she is dead now, poor thing, and you might let bygones be bygones. If you only knew the wickedness of the world, and the sins of other women's husbands," casting up her eyes.

"I know enough, too much," interrupted Lady Ravenhill, fiercely, "and I know those of my own. Believe me, he will let me go my own way as before when he hears the alternative!"

"You must have something terrible against him," said the old lady, awed by her young companion, who towered over her—tall and slender—with an expression that she had never seen before glittering in her eyes. Lady Ravenhill was in good truth, a very different person to Mrs. Hill.

"What is it?" she asked, in a frightened whisper, her curiosity being of a very robust nature, and not to be cowed even by this imperious young lady.

"I cannot tell you, it is between him and me. I will tell you this much—he is in my power. I hold him," tendering a slender member, blazing with rings, "in the very hollow of my hand!"

And looking at Mrs. Monckton believed her. "Well, my dear, I leave it between you," she said, with a regretful sigh—and, indeed, she had no choice. "There, there's the ball. I must go," and shaking out her satin skirts and giving her lappets a final twitch she bustled out of the room.

Nellie still remained behind; there was no hurry for her. She stood leaning against the mantelpiece lost in thought, wondering what she would say to her husband when the moment came. She had never spoken to him as her husband in her life. Would he be bowed, abject, covered with guilty remorse? Would he quail before her when she taxed him with his crime?

At last a fluttering and a swishing of silken skirts, and a pattering of high-heeled shoes down the corridor, warned her that the ladies of the house were flocking downstairs and she must follow them, and so she did, entering the drawing-room one of the last.

"Looks like Mary Queen of Scots on her way to execution," whispered Mrs. Derwent to a young man behind her fan, noting with devouring envy the black velvet dress and diamonds, and her rival's extraordinary brilliant appearance. She looked like another person since she had seen her that morning.

"If Mary Queen of Scots was half as good-looking I don't wonder men made fools of themselves about her!" returned the young man, following Nellie with eyes which expressed the deepest approval. "I'll never say history is a liar again. Who is she?"

"Hush. I'll tell you who she really is in confidence. Mum's the word, you understand. She passes herself off as a Mrs. Hill, but, in reality, she is Lady Ravenhill!"

"What!" in a tone of undisguised amazement, "the wife of that good-looking dark fellow who has just come in, and who is such a beggar to ride to hounds? Oh, come!"

"Yes, the very same, but they are at daggers drawn, and don't speak. Isn't it funny?"

"Very funny. I only wish I was Ravenhill, that's all!"

Nellie glanced at her husband, and saw in a second that he *knew*. He looked very cool and grave and preoccupied, and kept at the other side of the room till dinner was announced. Of course he took in one of the ladies of highest rank present; she was still Mrs. Hill, and she fell to the share of a good-looking hussar, with Captain Montagu on her left hand, and found herself *vis-à-vis* to Lord Ravenhill. His lady, who was old and greedy and deaf, did not care for anything but her dinner, and so long as her plate was supplied and her glass replenished she asked for nothing from her handsome, gloomy-looking partner. Very gloomy-looking he was, as he looked across and saw his wife (yes, he could hardly realise it,) receiving the most marked and flattering attention from two young men—his wife, who was far away the prettiest woman in the room, and who received these attentions with the utmost complacency, more than complacency, as far as Montagu was concerned, conceited brute, he would like to wring his neck; but now that he knew who she was there would be no more of this sort of thing, and he would make a point of telling her so, he said to himself, fiercely.

The more the trio opposite laughed and talked the more angry, the more furious, he became. Nellie exerted herself to her utmost, and her brilliant sallies and witty repartees were even repeated down her side of the table, and applauded enthusiastically.

"Who is the fellow opposite who looks so disgusted with life?" said the cheery hussar. "One would think he had committed a murder or was about to commit one. Eh! Mrs. Hill?"

The glass of champagne that Mrs. Hill was carrying to her lips shook so much that nearly half the contents were spilt over the cloth and on her own dress, which created a little diversion, and her friend the hussar forgot about the gentleman across the table by the time he had dried her lace and velvet.

"No wonder I saw a family likeness," said Hugh to himself, as he still gazed over at his cousin Eleanor. "She is the image of a picture in the gallery at Ravenwood, our maternal great grandmother's—another Eleanor. Who would imagine, to look at her eyes, so large and deep and brilliant, that they had ever been blind! They are making up for lost time now," he added to himself, angrily, as she beamed and smiled on Captain Montagu, who looked beside himself with delight.

How was he to know that she was acting a part, that her nerves were strung up to tension pitch, that she must laugh and talk and live in the present moment, and try to drown the horrible—horrible sickening truth that came back to her again and again, and whispered in her ear, "Your husband opposite! Look at him well. He is your cousin, too, and your nearest of kin, and he is a murderer."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DINNER was over at last and the large number of ladies and gentlemen who had assembled round Mr. and Mrs. Monckton's hospitable table were dispersed up and down the two big drawing-rooms, and were soon settled down in the usual fashion to cards, after one or two songs as a kind of duty to the wide open grand piano.

Now was Nellie's time. He had not appeared; no, she looked round, there was no sign of him. She stole out of the little drawing-room, across the wide oak hall, and with loudly beating heart paused before the library door with the handle in her hand.

He was there. She found him, when she had thrown it open, standing on the rug with his back to the fire, in an attitude of expectation. As she advanced, with all the dignity lent by a long black velvet train, he acknowledged her presence by a profound bow—nothing else. This was not what she expected. She was unprepared for this cool reception, and she stood afar off with her fan in one

hand, resting on the other. He was evidently not going to speak first, so she must. The first blow is half the battle, as they say in France.

"I suppose you know who I am?" she said, at last, in a trembling voice, allowing her eyes to fall before his.

"Yes, Lady Ravenhill!"

"Mrs. Derwent told you?"

"Yes," in an icy voice, and gazing at her with a strong, steady, scrutinizing glance.

"She told you that I had recovered my sight, taken another name, and lived as Mrs. Hill?"

"Precisely"—adding, "And I think, if I may presume to say so, that you might have taken me into your confidence before strangers."

"You were a stranger. You are a stranger. You would never know now, but for circumstances, which we will call by the name of Mrs. Derwent," ironically. "Won't you take a seat, Eleanor?" pushing a large easy chair before her.

"Yes," accepting it. "I will sit, for I have a good deal to say to you, and so that after to-night I will never—I shall never have occasion to speak to you again."

"Then you will be dumb instead of blind! for in future you will live under my roof. I need scarcely remark that we will have no more masquerading as Mrs. Hill, Lady Ravenhill."

"When you hear what I have to say, you will not be so anxious to have me for an inmate," she returned, making a valiant effort to steady her voice and be calm. "Listen to me for a minute," looking at him with a face of white defiance.

"Certainly," he replied, with another bow, taking an arm-chair, and evidently preparing to give her all his attention, with his arms folded, and his legs crossed.

"We married. You took me for my money, alone, and it was understood that we lived apart."

"By your wish," he interrupted, with emphasis.

"Yes, by my wish," she assented, haughtily. "I recovered my health and sight. I found that I was young—and—and pretty, like other girls, and I did not know what to do. Go back to you—no! Go out in society as Lady Ravenhill—impossible! So I hit on a medium course, and lived with my kind-friends, the Fortescues, as Mrs. Hill. For three years I lived a very happy, quiet life, and then I met you. I need not conceal from you now that I liked you very much—too much!—becoming very red. "I knew who you were. There was no harm in my thinking a great deal of you, and more than once I had an avowal actually trembling on my lips."

She paused, and wiped her forehead with her lace-bordered handkerchief, whilst he waited on in silence.

"But," she resumed, in a clear voice, "Mrs. Derwent opened my eyes on Seabeach pier, as we were watching your yacht out of harbour, whilst it was even in sight. She told me that when the blind and imbecile wife was dead you were under a solemn promise to marry her!"

"It is false!" interrupted Lord Ravenhill, indignantly.

"She showed me your love-letters, calling her 'your own darling'; letters of a week old," said Lady Ravenhill, in a tone of dogged conviction.

"Forgeries," he now remarked, quite coolly. "Nay, did you never write to her in that strain? They were no forgeries, as far as I could judge!"

"I may have years ago, very likely," shrugging his shoulders. "All men make fools of themselves, but I am ready to swear that I have never written her anything that might not be posted in the market-place during the last five years!"

"But the envelope had a date only three days old!"

"An answer to an invitation. But," angrily, "where is the use of combating the matter

with you, if you won't believe me? You won't, and there's an end of it!"

"This story of Mrs. Derwent's accounts for everything, and your sudden extraordinary change towards me."

"Partly; not altogether!" significantly. "What else have you against me?" lazily twisting his moustache.

"Much," half choking, "too much! And now," rising, "do you know that your life is in my hands, that I have only to say, the word to give you to the hangman?"

At this he, too, rose, pale to the very lips, shaken with emotion, and said in a low voice,—

"You would make an admirable actress, madam! Tragedy is your forte, tragedy without a grain of truth, like Lady Macbeth!"

"Sneer as you please, but I possess your secret—your awful secret—that I believe will kill me!" pressing her hands to her heart. "You are safe though, as far as I am concerned. The truth shall never pass my lips! I," she added, raising her beautiful frightened eyes to his face, "I—miserable woman that I am—I know all—all!" she added, with an involuntary shudder.

"And what is that all, if I may ask?" he demanded, coming closer to her, with a sudden movement.

"Your—what am I to say?" getting scarlet. "How am I to describe it? Your love affair with Rosie Waller!"

"My love affair with Rosie Waller?" he cried, incredulously.

"Yes, I saw you myself! I saw you with my own eyes whispering together! I saw the child—your child!"

"Your nerve, and your audacity, and your effrontery are on a par, madam! Pray go on! Pray don't blush! Nothing that you could say would surprise me now. I Rosie Waller's lover?"

"Yes; and—and her murderer into the bargain!"

As these words dropped from Lady Ravenhill's lips she sank back into her seat, and covering her face with her hands burst into a storm of tears, whilst her husband stood on the rug before her as if he had been turned into stone.

The ticking of the clock, and the falling of the members, and Lady Ravenhill's sobs were the only sounds to be heard for nearly five minutes. At last he said, in a strange, hard voice,—

"Murderer, am I? Where are your proofs? Give me one!"

"I have only too many!" she gasped, at length. "Your intimacy with Rosie—your absence that night at the very hour it was committed, your pale, disordered appearance, your injured arm," she shuddering. "She struggled, they said, poor creature, for her life! Her necktie in your pocket, your wish for secrecy, your saying it was a case of life and death, your looks of horror, remorse, and guilt ever since! Have I said enough?" pausing, out of breath.

"Quite!" emphatically.

"Well, now that I have told you who I am, and what I know," rising, "we part again for life? Do not touch me!" seeing him approach, putting out both hands, with a gesture of horror. "Keep away!" shrinking back.

"Eleanor, you are an impetuous, credulous, foolish girl, carried away by your feelings and by appearances! You accuse me of being the ruin of Rosie Waller, of murdering her and her child. Can you really seriously mean what you say, or are you labouring under some monstrous delusion?" gazing at her critically. "I am your own cousin, putting anything else aside. The same blood flows in our veins. Do you really and truly imagine that I, a Ravenhill, for no ostensible reason whatever, would murder a woman and child that you believe have such a claim on me? Come, now, think calmly. Do I look like it?" taking her hands in spite of herself.

"Appearances are deceitful!" she replied. "Seeing is believing! Let go my hands this

instant, sir!" struggling. "Let me go—do you hear?"

"Presently—presently! I have something to say to you first. Everything you believe is wrong—wrong in all respects! I could clear myself even to you now, this moment; but after what you have said I shall not stoop to do so. Time will clear me, and then you will come and beg my pardon, and wonder how you could ever have said the things you have said to me to-night. You will be very humble, and very penitent." Here Nellie gasped, and tried to speak, but in vain. "For the future you will live under my roof," he proceeded, coolly, "not at Ravenswood, but at our place in Blankshire. No, you need not frown, you are caught, and I'll never let you go—never! Now that I have got a wife I mean to keep her. You shall take your place in the world as Lady Ravenhill. I have written to Mrs. Fortescue to-night, and told her everything, all, and thanked her for all she has done for you and me, and I don't mean to let my thanks stop there. I was very wrong to marry you as I did—very; but I was an impenitent, wild young man, steeped in difficulties. I seemed to have no other resource. But it was mean of me to take the money and to let you go. I shall amend this now. You will live in my house for the future. Nay, you need not struggle. I hold you as fast morally as I do by your two hands here!"

"I would sooner die than live with you! I will poison myself first!" she cried, vehemently.

"Now, now, Eleanor! let me give you a caution. Every speech of this kind you make—you are laying a heavier burden on yourself. Everything you have said to-night you will be sorry for, sooner or later. You will live under my roof, and you will not take poison; and for the bad opinion you have of me, which is so monstrous as to be almost ludicrous, and I would laugh, only that I am in no humour, on account of my poor Rosie's horrible death. For your bad opinion of me you, as I said, you shall be punished as you were going to punish me. We shall live under the same roof, apart, and, excepting in public, I shall never open my lips to you after to-night, until you humbly come and beg my pardon, and confess that I was neither Rose Waller's lover nor her murderer. Now, that's your sentence. You came, I could see, to pronounce a verdict on me, and the judgment is reversed—the foot is on the other foot. To-morrow we shall travel away south, and you shall take your friend Mary to keep you company, and to talk to, if you choose; and now, I think, I have no more to say—except that I am a man of my word!" Stooping and kissing her on the lips (before she had realised what he was about to do), and leaving hold of her hands at last, he stepped back and motioned her away.

How she got out of the room she never knew. She felt her brain swimming, her face on fire, as she paused for a moment in the hall, and listened to the merry laughter and voices coming from the inner drawing-room. This was turning the tables with a vengeance! She had gone for wool, to use the old proverb, and came back scorn! She had gone to denounce her husband, and she had been tried, condemned, and was to be punished herself! She had said she held him in the hollow of her hand, and, on the contrary, she found herself in his power, and that he meant to hold her with a grasp of iron.

Could she be wrong about Rose? Could she? could she? she asked herself, feverishly, as she leant her hot forehead against the cool marble chimney-piece in her own room. He looked innocent enough; but what did looks signify? How was he to account for his absence that fatal night? How dared he speak of his poor Rose, the girl whose mangled, murdered body lay now in her coffin, with her blood upon his head!

How dared he kiss her? It was pollution, rubbing her face with her handkerchief. It was the first and last he should ever take,

that was a positive fact. Go with him to-morrow she must; but she would take any early opportunity of making her escape. With her hands in his, his eyes on hers, his voice, which was low, and pleasant, but distinctly authoritative, in her ear, she felt to a certain extent under the influence of a stronger mind than her own; but now she was alone, all her suspicions—her more than suspicions—came over her, and overwhelmed her like a flood; and she was certain that she was doing her duty, when she hardened her heart, and made up her mind to think nothing but evil of her husband. She must not be weak, she must be strong. All he had said to her had been but words—words, empty words!

However, society has claims that must be respected. It was too early to retire. She must show herself below once more. She entered the drawing-room; room was made for her among the young people at the "Vingt-un" table, and she was received as a kind of lost prodigal, and loaded with counters and cards. Could she believe her eyes? There, at the opposite side, sat her husband, who had evidently joined the card party some time previously, to judge by the large pile of mother-o'-pearl-fish before him, and was playing with great dash—one of the leading spirits in the circle—and praised up "Blind Hokey" to the skies, as much more sporting and twice as exciting as "Rouge-et-noir." He cut and shuffled, and dealt, and laughed, and talked, and gambled, and gave dozens of counters to a pretty little blue-eyed American girl who sat next him; and took no notice whatever of his wife. He seemed to have forgotten her very existence, as he had of that grim, white-sheeted object which was yet above ground, and whose blood was surely crying out for vengeance!

(To be continued.)

A "Printers' Saturday" has been set apart during the last two years to collect offerings from every printer's "Chapel" early in the New Year for the benefit of aged and infirm members of the trade and their widows, through the medium of the Printers' Pension Corporation. This Institution now assists 160 aged and infirm printers or their widows, by pensions, &c., provides free residence, coals, endowment, and medical attendance for twenty-four persons in the Almshouses at Wood Green, and maintains and educates numerous printers' orphans. Many deserving applications, however, must be refused for lack of funds. In 1883 Printers' Saturday produced nearly £146. As—to quote the late Dean's Stanley's expression—"the incapacitated printer has strong claims on all who have written and all who have read," the public may feel disposed to send their mite to the Treasurers, Messrs. W. Clowes and G. Spottiswoode, at the office of the Printers' Corporation, 20, High Holborn, W.C.

THE SCIENCE OF CARVING.

IN this lazy man's century the delightful occupation of carving is almost a forgotten art. It used to be much a pleasure for a gang of hungry children to sit and watch "pa" sharpen the carving-knife, give it that preliminary flourish, and then insert its delicate point under the wing of the brown and odorous turkey; to see pinions and second joints, slices of white meat, crown drumsticks, the pope's nose, all showering in symmetrical portions from the noble bird, and to wonder why turkeys didn't have four legs and a double row of wings.

A good carver seems to give away all the turkey and go without any himself. But when everybody is helped he picks out bits of tender loin, morsels of brown and juicy meat, odds and ends that, as everybody knows, are the tidbits of the feast.

It would be as dangerous an experiment to ask a young man of the present time to carve a turkey as it would be to require him to ask a blessing on the food. He would either sprain his wrist or fire the turkey through the window in an attempt to cut it in two.

GOLDEN GRAIN.

CHAPTER X.

SLEEP only brought me more perplexity and trouble, for I dreamed a wild, fitful ugly dream that made me hot and feverish, and was no relief; for after the weariness of my long vigil, sleep brought with it the image of my mother and her parting injunction to me. I was travelling far, and with sore difficulty, in search of my father over moor and mountain, always hindered and dragged back, till Hugh Meredyth came to the rescue and led me forward. Then my mother was at my side frowning, and a huge something, with the face of Rueben Fairchild, came between me and my protector, and forced me back into darkness and pain once more, with nothing to guide me, and my mother's curse ringing in my ears.

Then fatigue asserted itself, and I lost all consciousness, till a summons at my bedroom door roused me into half-wakefulness. I could not recall where I was, or what had happened, and before I had collected my wits sufficiently to answer, the tapping was repeated, and I bade the knocker come in.

The housekeeper gently opened the door and peeped in; I sat up and looked at her, only half remembering who she was or what I was doing in the unfamiliar room.

"I hope you slept well, miss," she said.

"Yes, thank you," I replied; "that is, I don't think I have slept very long, the strange room, and—"

"Ah, yes, miss, I understand, I never thought of it. Perhaps you would have liked company; many persons have a dread of sleeping where a corpse has been."

"I never thought of that," I said, to her great relief. "I am not at all superstitious. I was thinking too much to sleep, I suppose everything has come upon me so suddenly."

"That it has. I am sure we all feel for you, Miss Ormsby. Would you like to have your breakfast sent up, or will you come down to breakfast with the doctor; he bade me ask you?"

"Does Dr. Legrange expect me?"

"Well, miss, he said he should be glad to speak to you, and he has so little time to spare that if there's any business you have to go through with him I should advise you to take advantage of the breakfast-hour; he is almost torn to pieces for an hour or two afterwards."

"Thank you," I said, "I will. What time must I be down?"

"At once, if you please, miss; the bell will ring directly."

She left me to dress, and I drew aside the curtain I had shut the moonlight out with only so short a time before. There was no fear of my being overlooked; there was no one to see me but the birds that flitted hither and thither singing and chirping, as if in very joyousness at the glory of the morning. The sea lay before me, blue and sparkling, with white sails flitting over it, and gulls dipping here and there, and soaring away like specks of white down in the clear air.

I could hear the hum of bees, and smell the scent of a hundred flowers, and even some of the inmates of the house at liberty in the grounds were singing as they walked or worked, like people in their senses. I could hardly realize what a load of trouble and difficulty I had upon me as I looked out on the beautiful world, with all my fears and weariness conquered by the loveliness around me. I think I was in a sort of dream still, till the comfortable toilet arrangements sent me back in spirit to Wassenhauer and my old life there.

Madame Loventhal was quite English in her appreciation of cold water, and we were encouraged to use it in a fashion that was rather alarming to the parents of some of the girls, who imagined that a bath and sudden death were synonymous terms; and I missed over my old school-life, during my dressing till a sudden cold chill of recollection that I had

parted from them all, in all probability for ever, brought me back to the world and my troubles once more.

My spirits went down to zero, notwithstanding the sunshine and brightness without; but youth is elastic, and in spite of my troubles, I was hungry—honestly and healthily hungry—and breakfast seemed to me about the most desirable thing in the world. I found my way downstairs, wondering to myself what made the house seem so much brighter than when I had arrived, only a few days before.

There was an air of gladness all over it, and everyone spoke with a briskness that had been wanting the day before. People smiled and greeted one another and me, as there was some nightmare removed.

I felt ashamed of myself for being inclined to resent all this, when I remembered that the nightmare which had been lifted from the inmates of Navarre House was the presence of my mother's corpse. They had all respected and revered her, if they had not loved her tenderly; and here they all seemed to have forgotten her, and be going about their daily duties as if she had never existed. I could not help reproaching myself, as well as the Doctor's household, for the feeling of relief that had come upon me with this bright morning's sun. The still presence in that darkened chamber had been a weight on my mind and spirits, the removal of which was a great relief.

Doctor Legrange was sitting in the breakfast parlour when I went down; he rose and held out his hand to me.

"Good morning, my dear," he said, "I hope you slept well."

"Not very well," I replied. And he shook his head at me.

"A wakeful night is a bad preparation for business," he said. "Perhaps it was the association of the room that kept you awake."

"No, I was reading the papers you gave me."

"Very foolish of me to give them to you last night; I should have kept them till to-day. Charlie, my boy, ring for the fish. We will talk about business when we have eaten, Miss Ormsby. No mental work was ever done well on an empty stomach."

Charles Legrange did as he was bid. He was just the young man for doing as he was bid, though he was trustworthy and patient, as his long journey with me from Wassenhauser amply proved, and Dr. Legrange, when the fish arrived, deliciously fresh and beautifully cooked, helped me liberally, and bade me make a good breakfast, and he would talk to me afterwards.

"But, your time is so valuable," I said, aghast. "Mrs. Pain said I must catch you at breakfast, or you would not be able to give me a minute perhaps."

"Mrs. Pain is a—woman," he said, with a smile; "I was going to say something much more expressive, Miss Ormsby, but I will spare you. Suffice it to say that I do not inform my household how I spend all my time, and I shall have as much at your service when I have done my duty by this chad as ever you want."

I thanked him heartily, and we finished our breakfasts without any allusions to my affairs. And the doctor took me to his sacred little sanatorium, where scarcely anyone was ever admitted.

"You are honoured, I can tell you," he said, as he closed the door. "This is looked on in the house as a sacred room; even Charles is only admitted here as a great favour."

"I am grateful," I said, "and honoured also. I am very thankful for the chance of speaking to you about business. My mother's charge to me was—"

"A strange and difficult one to lay upon a girl; and you are no more, Miss Ormsby, in years, though you have a head wise enough for any age."

"You are very kind to say so, Dr. Legrange."

"I have a habit of plain speaking, my dear.

What are you going to do? Shall you obey her?"

"Of course I shall."

"Hunt up your father, and having found him claim what is yours—you cannot be blamed for wishing to do that. Have you thought how you will set about it?"

"I have been thinking of nothing else for many hours. I must find out more about my mother before I take any further steps. I know nothing of her, absolutely nothing, but what those papers have told me, and my first task must be to know something more of her."

"A good resolve. In doing that you may come across some trace of her husband—the man whom she accuses of deceiving her."

"Whom she accuses, Dr. Legrange! Who did deceive her, who betrayed and slighted her till she ran away from the home he had outraged. She might well accuse him after that."

"Gently, my dear, gently," Dr. Legrange said, smiling at my vehemence, "I spoke advisedly in what I said; but about yourself, how do you propose to set about finding out your mother's antecedents?"

"I shall go to America at once."

"To America, eh?"

"Yes, it was there she lived, there my father met her. I shall surely find someone who will help me to tidings of her in the city where she worked and battled with the world."

"Very likely, but how will you get there? Have you the means?"

Dr. Legrange asked the question in such a provokingly cool manner that I was almost ready to cry with vexation at my own stupidity. I had thought nothing of what it would cost to get to New York, nor where I should get the money to go. I had nothing, and a voyage across the Atlantic costs money, but in my present excited state of mind such little drawbacks as want of money and experience never presented themselves to me.

"Have you counted the cost of such a journey?" the doctor asked, looking at me with a rather amused smile. "But perhaps you have means that I know nothing of—in that case, pardon the rudeness of my question, and tell me of your plans."

I looked as I felt, I daresay, blank enough, and the doctor went on provokingly as I thought.

"You cannot make such a journey without means," he said; "America is a long way off, but if you really make up your mind to such a step I think the means may be found."

"I don't know how," I returned, rather crestfallen, and ashamed of my own stupidity and haste, "I have no money."

"Yes you have, not a fortune, but still some. Your mother was a saving woman, and I don't believe she spent anything while she was here after her first outfit, except the money necessary for your school expenses and clothing."

"I did not know she had any money," I said, feeling wonderfully relieved, and thinking how nice it would be to be able to refund whatever the doctor might have laid out for me, and give something to the attendants who had been very kind to me; I did not imagine that there would be much more than this. I was literally destitute as far as money was concerned, and no small part of my perplexities had arisen from the uncertainty of what I should do for means to get even to England.

"I did not know either, till she made me her confidant in the matter, and asked me to see that it was placed in your hands. She would have told you with her own lips that, and many other things, I expect, had more time been given her. She would not own herself ill nor allow us to do anything for her till it was too late to save her. You will be mistress of about three hundred pounds altogether, Miss Ormsby!"

"Three hundred pounds!"

I could only gasp out the words after him and stare at him as if I were demented, the sum seemed to me so amazing. Only once in my life—and I was just upon eighteen years old—had I possessed the sum of half-a-sovereign

of my own, and my pittance at school had been of the very slenderest. If I could boast of a couple of marks in my pocket at once I thought myself rich. My darling Dora would have had me share the unstinted pocket-money she received from home, but I was too proud for that, though she did all sorts of good-natured things to make me the equal of the other girls in little comforts that we had to provide for ourselves, or go without.

"Yes, my dear, three hundred pounds," Dr. Legrange said, smiling at my astonishment. "And you won't find it go very far; it is not a great sum, when young ladies want to take voyages to America, or anywhere else."

Not a large sum! It seemed to me to be a gold mine. And the figure the doctor showed me in a little book neatly kept, and proved to me that it was there, danced before my excited eyes as if they were alive.

"That is not all," he said, "there is something more."

"More!"

"Yes, not money, but money's worth, I fancy."

He went to an old-fashioned bureau which stood in a niche beside the fireplace, and brought out a leather case, which he placed before me.

"That is yours, as well as the money, my dear," he said.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE WING.

I LOOKED at the brown, rather worn case, and knew that it contained jewels of some sort; and then with a touch on the spring I opened it, to set it down on the table again, startled out of all reason by the flood of brilliance that seemed to spring from it with the opening of the lid.

It was as if some of the sunbeams that were flooding everything outside with such glorious radiance had somehow been imprisoned there, and were rejoicing at being let out again. Diamonds of matchless brilliance and beauty, and some of them of great size also; they might have belonged to an empress, and many a queen could not boast of such gems. In the centre of the case was a large old-fashioned brooch capable of being transformed into a head ornament; laid round it was a bracelet, set so flexibly that it seemed as if the stones were threaded on something elastic, and a pair of earrings had their place in appointed corners.

Round the whole, looking like a thread of fire, was a necklace, the setting hardly visible, so that the stones alone would show when it was worn, and gladden with exquisite effect on a fair skin. The deep purple of the velvet lining of the case formed an excellent background to the whole, and I could not repress a little cry of delight and admiration.

I caught a curl of the good doctor's lip as he heard me; it was a look of something very like contempt for the weakness of a woman's nature. I was quick to ear and eye those days, and sensitive to a fault; and Dr. Legrange had had nothing to do with girls in his life. He had only one child, Charles, and he was a pattern of filial obedience, and the very reflection of his father's ideas.

"A true woman!" he muttered, half to himself.

"I suppose I am," I said. "I never saw anything so beautiful before; are they diamonds?"

"Yes."

"And mine?"

"Yours."

He showed me something I had overlooked in my surprise and admiration—a bit of paper slipped into the lining of the case. On it was written in my mother's handwriting—a peculiarly precise and characteristic hand—the words "for my daughter, Magdalen," and I took the necklace out, and let the bright gems hang over my fingers and catch the light while the doctor told me how she had placed them in his charge.

"It was when we knew she could not recover, and I had sent Charles to fetch you," he said. "I was with her; for, indeed, I never thought she would live to see you, and it was not safe to leave her for a moment. She had been suffering a great deal, and I hoped she was asleep, when she suddenly turned to me and asked if I thought she would live till you came. I told her plainly that it was doubtful. She was not the woman to temporise with or tell a soothing untruth to. She knew as well as I did, but she wanted confirmation of her own doubts. Then I have something else to give in charge to you," she said. "I wanted particularly to put them into my child's own hands, but that will, in all probability, be denied me." I wondered what she could possibly mean, for she had already given me her bank-book, with instructions what to do with the amount therein, and the parcel of papers that you read over last night. I thought, perhaps, her mind was wandering a little, but I found she was as clear and composed as ever. She begged me to open a little cabinet she always kept locked in her room, and take out what I should find there. It was this case, and she made me promise to give it to you with my own hands, and to exact one condition from you concerning it."

"What condition?" I asked, looking at the imprisoned rays of light that were flashing about my hands.

"That you would never part with them."

"And she told you nothing more about them?"

"Nothing."

"Nor where they came from?"

"Not a single word; she was silent on the point, purposely I think, for I asked her once something about them, and she made no answer."

"Where could they have come from?" I said, wondering; "how could she get such things? I never saw anything of the sort while she was alive; but I was certainly not with her much, and from her papers I have gathered that she left her husband's house without taking anything with her; in her indignation and grief she would never think of her jewels."

The doctor smiled, and shook his head.

"No," he said; "from what I know of her—and I came to know her pretty well in the time she was with me—I should say she was the sort of woman to walk out of a house where she had suffered a wrong or fancied one."

"Fancied one, Dr. Legrange?" I said, indignantly, "there was no fancy about my mother's cruel fate."

"My dear, I did not hint there was, but women do fancy things sometimes. I say she was just the sort of person to go out of a house with nothing to shelter her from the weather and no means of getting a meal rather than touch an article belonging to a person who had offended her. The jewels did not come into her possession that way, however she came by them."

"There was nothing about the case or parcel itself to tell where it came from, or by whom it was made; there were obliterated letters on the leather lid, but whether the maker's name or an inscription or monogram we could not make out; all that remained was a little half-worn gilding that might have been anything."

After a little while of surprise and admiration I put the case aside; for I felt that I must not take up too much of the doctor's time, especially in the morning.

"Don't worry about that," he said, when I made some remark about it. "I laid out," as the Yankees say, to give up this morning to you. I thought you would be glad to talk to me, my dear, as I am to give you any advice that you may want."

"You are very kind," I replied. "I have no claim to trespass on your time like this, but I am very friendless."

"And that gives you a claim, does it not? You can command me, my dear, in any way in which I can help you. Now about this American journey. Do you really wish to go?"

"Don't you think it would be the best thing for me to do?"

"I think it most desirable for you to know as much as possible about your mother's antecedents," the doctor replied, in a curiously guarded tone; he seemed as if there was something he would say to me, but purposely held it back. "If you do go, I may be able to help you with a letter or two to desirable people on the other side of the Atlantic. You will find it hard work getting along alone, even if it were a fit thing for a young girl like you to do, which it is not."

"That will make the way clear for me at once," I said, delightedly. "How shall I ever thank you, Dr. Legrange?"

"By going soberly to work and not being too impetuous," he replied, with a twinkle in his eye that made me smile back, in spite of myself. "I know exactly what you would like to do; you would charter a balloon if you could, and set off without waiting for ships or anything else."

"I believe I would; I feel as if I couldn't rest till I have found out something."

"My dear, when you do find out, you may come to wish that you had never commenced the search," he said, his smile vanishing, and a grave look taking its place; "but I don't want to damp your ardour, only to warn you that you may find pain and disappointment as well as what you seek, if you ever do find it. You will stay with us while you make your preparations; you cannot start off on a voyage like that without forethought and a certain amount of getting ready."

I hardly knew how to thank him, his offer was so kind. I had been picturing to myself a lonely existence in London or somewhere without a friend to speak to, and subjected to all the impositions of people who entrap unwary strangers; and how, here was a home for me till I should start on my wanderings in search of the clue that was to guide me to the father I was to expose and punish.

I had come to like Navarre House, and the good doctor and Mrs. Payne were so kind to me, and everybody was considerate, and leaving the place would be like another break in my life. The tears stood in my eyes as I took the doctor's hand and pressed it.

"There, there, that will do," he said, laughing; "if you go into heroics about a simple thing like a week or two's lodging I shall be afraid to tell you that I mean to see you off on your travels myself. I want a holiday, and I shall go to Liverpool with you and put you on board a ship whose captain I know. If we can make things fit, I have more than one acquaintance among the commanders of those big ocean steamers. I might send Charlie with you all the way, and he would like to go; but I am afraid we should set Mrs. Grundy talking, and, besides, I don't think you would like Charlie for a travelling companion."

"Indeed, I should not!" was my inward reflection, but I did not speak it aloud. Mr. Charles Legrange was a very polite young man, and had been very kind on my hurried journey from Wassenhausen, but he would have been simply unbearable for a lengthened tour, and I felt very glad there was a "Mrs. Grundy" in the way of my having such a protector.

The next fortnight passed like a day. I was very busy, and not unhappy; there was a novelty about everything that kept me from brooding, and I think the doctor managed to arrange things for me so that I was so tired when I went to bed that I slept soundly and did not brood. The glorious air and the fine weather and the rides and walks he made me take, together with all I had to do, put me in splendid training for what I had to accomplish, and the day of my departure drew very near indeed without my realizing it was so close.

The doctor took pains to find out a ship whose captain he knew, and my berth was taken on board the *Aptrodite* for New York. I think there was nothing he did not think of for me to make my comfort secure. All sorts of little items for the voyage that I

should never have thought of were provided for me, and numberless directions given me in writing as to what I should do when I reached the other side. My letters he said he would give me the last thing, as something might occur to him at the very last moment.

Only two days remained before I was to launch myself into the world of which I knew so little, and begin the battle of life for myself. I had no fears; I was too secure in my own innocence and good faith and the righteousness of my cause to have any of the misgivings that would have been natural to a girl of my age. I was picturing to myself what the voyage would be like, and what sort of a reception I should meet with in America, when I saw the doctor ride out for his usual round among his patients.

I remember thinking what a hale, handsome man he looked, as he turned and saw me sitting at the window, and waved an adieu to me with a pleasant smile. He looked so thorough a gentleman in his well-fitting riding gear, and so fatherly and kind withal, that I felt quite a pain at my heart as I thought how soon that pleasant face and that white hair would be only a remembrance to me, and how far I should soon be from all I had ever known on this side the water.

I was busy about my room for perhaps an hour after the doctor's departure, when I was roused from some arrangements I was making by the sound of footsteps and voices at the gate of the private garden into which my room looked. I went to the window, for the bustle was unusual, and there to my horror I beheld a stretcher, and on it apparently insensible the form of Dr. Legrange. To rush downstairs was the work of a moment, but everybody was out already, and I was not permitted to go near him.

"I will tell you as soon as I know," Charles Legrange whispered to me, as I stood aside to let the men with their sad burden pass in. He is not killed, and I hope only stunned."

That was something, though not much, and I breathlessly questioned the men who had brought the doctor home. They had not much to tell except that they had found him lying under the rocks not far from the house, and his horse standing by his side. He was fond of riding along the beach, and we could only imagine that the beast had stumbled and thrown him.

It was a great relief when Charles Legrange came to me half-an-hour after and reassured me. A broken arm and a general shaking were all the damage. His father was quite well enough to see me if I would go to his room. I went, to be greeted with a smile, though the doctor's face was very pale.

"You will have to go by yourself, my dear," he said; "the fates are against us; I cannot even spare Charley, you see."

I could not wait. My berth was taken and paid for; and even if it were not it was hardly advisable for me to put off my journey, as the year was wearing away; and after August the voyage would not be so pleasant; so there was nothing for it but for me to bid all the friends who had been so kind to me a sad good-bye, and start off alone on my long, weary journey.

CHAPTER XII.

OVER THE SEA.

I FELT very desolate as the boat in which I was to cross to England moved away from the pier at St. Heliers, and I caught a last glimpse of Charles Legrange waving his hat as we passed out of sight. It was a great disappointment to me losing the escort of the doctor as far as Liverpool. I was nervous at the thought of the journey thither alone, and sadly desolate at my unexpected loneliness. Everybody at Navarre House had been so kind that it was like leaving home to go away from them all.

I carried some comfort with me in the shape of letters, both from Madame Loventhal, and my darling Dorothy Bondes. They had both been away, and had not received my letters in

time to answer them before, and I had been sorrowing over the thought that they had forgotten me. I might have known Dora better, and Madame too, but the former had her friends and her home and all the joys of a brilliant life, and the latter had her business and her many cares, and it would have been excusable if she had not found time for correspondence with me.

It was something to carry with me to the new world the assurances of their love and sympathy, and offers from them both of a home if ever I wanted one. "Come and live with me, dear," Dora wrote, "I have no sister, and I want one so badly; my parents would love you as I do." I kissed her dear words over and over again, and laid her letter lovingly by to be answered when I got to New York, or perhaps on the passage over. Madame was no less cordial, though perhaps more matter-of-fact. There would always be room for me at the monastery school, she told me, if the world went hard with me. She could find me something to do, and I should be sure of a welcome if ever I liked to go back.

Somehow the sea looked bluer and the sunbeams brighter after I had read these two letters, and I landed in England with a lighter heart than I had carried when I bade Jersey farewell. My impressions of this part of my life's history are very dreamy and vague now. I have not forgotten any part of my experiences, they pressed too heavily on me for that; but they have taken the form in my memory of a dream, vague in parts, and startlingly clear in others, and I think my first notion of London after my long absence from England belongs to the former part of them.

I remember Southampton and the bustle of arriving there, and the railway journey, (which impressed me most of all by its speed, for our German trains were very slow at that time,) and the hurry that everybody seemed to be in about everything. I came to know afterwards that that was a part of the busy English character, and to find out that, hurried as the English people seemed, the New Yorkers were infinitely more so.

I had to stay in London a night, for the *Aphrodite* did not sail till the evening of the next day, and it would have been very late for me to have travelled to Liverpool and then seek a lodging. So I went to the hotel Dr. Legrange used sometimes, within easy distance of Euston-square station; and, mentioning his name, was comfortably put up, and attended to with more respect than a lonely girl would generally command. I made a comfortable meal, but I could not sleep when I went to bed; the house seemed so large, and the noises outside were so incessant, that I could hardly believe it was night, and yet I was told that the hotel was singularly quiet.

I had been used to such total silence at Wassenhauser, where nothing more noisy than a stray cat disturbed the rest of the village after the lights were put out, and at Navarre House, where we heard nothing but the wind and the dash of the sea upon the beach, that the never-ceasing rattle of wheels, and the curious distant hum which came from parts of London, where labour went on by night as well as day, got into my ears and effectually prevented my sleeping. It was daylight before I fell into a heavy slumber, and slept late and woke unrefreshed. I fancied it was very terrible when the trim chambermaid told me it was nine o'clock; such hours were unknown at Wassenhauser, but she seemed to think nothing of it, and told me I could have breakfast at any hour up till twelve.

I was glad when the time came for me to go to the station to continue my journey. I expect I was over fatigued and excited without being aware of it, for the sight of the streets and the crowds of people and the busy hum of constant traffic, bewildered me and made me giddy. I was to leave Euston by a train which reached Liverpool about five o'clock in the afternoon—plenty of time, for the *Aphrodite* did not start till nearly eight—and I had nothing to do except walk on board. All arrangements had been

carefully made for me, and I had the number of my berth and a note from Dr. Legrange to the captain, commending me to his care.

I had seen to my luggage, and taken care that my boxes were all properly labelled, and was waiting for the weighing process which I hardly understood, when I heard a familiar voice.

"By Jove!" it said. "Look here—Magdalen Ormsby! That's the jolly girl I helped off the Lurley Rock. I wonder where she is, and where she's going!"

I turned round sharply and confronted Harry Meredyth, contemplating my travelling-bag, which was marked with my name in full. Not Harry alone—a tall figure by his side, the sight of which made my heart leap. The boyish voice rang out again cheery and musical, sending all my low spirits and fears away like summer clouds.

"How jolly to meet you!" he said. "Are you going our way, I wonder? This is my cousin Hugh, the best fellow in the world; you remember Hugh, don't you; he was with us at Wassenhauser?"

Remember him! Did I not remember him—did not every nerve in me thrill at the sight of him? Did not the cheerless station, with its bustling crowds, turn into a veritable paradise of loveliness, all because of that grey-coated figure, with the frank, open face and the wonderful eyes? I was a fool, I dare say, but the brightness of life came back for a minute, and I was no longer the desolate, friendless girl I had been a minute before.

He held out his hand, and mine lay once more in his warm grasp; not for a moment only this time—he kept it for a very brief space.

"I am glad to meet you again, Miss Ormsby," he said, "it is an unexpected pleasure. Are you alone?"

"Yes," I replied. "Quite alone!"

"And where are you going?" asked Harry Meredyth, bluntly. "Can we do anything for you?"

"I am going to Liverpool, en route for America," I replied. And I saw Hugh Meredyth start and look at me as I mentioned it.

"That is a long way!" he remarked; "you are going to friends, I trust?"

"No, I have none."

He would have spoken, but his cousin interposed.

"And we are going to Liverpool. Hugh's on his way to his regiment. It's awfully jolly, we can all go together; I'll get the tickets!" He was turning away when his cousin stopped him.

"My dear Harry, we may be interfering with Miss Ormsby's arrangements; she may not care to have us for travelling companions."

"Oh, indeed, I should be very glad!" I said, never thinking of "Mrs. Grandy," and I saw a new light come into Hugh Meredyth's eyes as I spoke. Away went Harry to get the tickets, and came back radiant.

"There was just one compartment left," he said, "and I have got it; we shan't be intruded on all the way. Now then, Miss Ormsby, what belongs to you? our fellow will see to it."

"Our fellow" made his appearance from somewhere, and I had no more trouble about my belongings, and before I had recovered from my surprise at their appearance, I was whirling through the country in a first-class carriage, with Hugh Meredyth by my side and Harry seated opposite, declaring at intervals how jolly it was to have met me, and offering me all sorts of impossible things to eat and read, like a generous boy as he was.

He had scouted the idea of the second-class ticket I was going to take, and insisted I was his guest, and that he should have had the compartment all the same for himself and Hugh, for he hated to be squeezed. A quiet word or two from his cousin convinced me that he really meant what he said, and that I need not scruple to accept the seat, and I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the hour and the contemplation of my travelling companions. Hugh was going to join his regiment. I had

not known he was a soldier, and I caught myself regarding him with a new interest on account of the fact.

I might have known it from the upright carriage and the steady gait, and from a certain precision of manner which I had admired from the first moment of seeing him in our school lecture-hall. I learned that he belonged to a regiment of dragoons, at present quartered near Dublin, and that he was going back off leave with Harry for a companion. I could look at him and think of him now at my leisure as the train whirled us through the beautiful midlands on the journey, so suddenly turned from a thing of discomfort and pain to an enjoyable trip.

"Harry takes great liberties, Miss Ormsby," he said, when we were fairly on our way. "He never stopped to ask whether you would like the arrangement he has made; he has taken it for granted you see, that you are as pleased to see us as we are to meet you."

As pleased! My heart was beating wildly with delight, and I was only afraid that I should show in my tell-tale face what a pleasure it was to be sitting there beside him.

"I think I am quite as pleased!" I said, trying to speak calmly. "I had believed that all my friends were in the past."

"You are leaving them all behind, then? Some one, I see," he added, gently, touching my sleeve as he spoke, "in a hom; which there is no leaving."

"Yes," I replied, "my mother."

"Forgive me," Hugh Meredyth said, with a world of regretful gentleness in his voice, "I have touched a subject I should have avoided."

"Oh, no! There are people that sympathy is sweet from."

I would have given something to have recalled my words the moment they were spoken, and yet the look they called up in the face I was watching was worth the temerity, that made me blush when I thought of it. I could not meet it, and I cast down my own eyes and was silent. Harry Meredyth came to the rescue.

"Whatever is taking you to America?" he asked.

"My dear Harry," expostulated Hugh, "Miss Ormsby may not like to be questioned."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," the lad said, promptly. "I did not mean to ask a rude question; but I don't think I like the notion of her going a bit. It was so jolly to see her again all by accident, and it's horrid to find she is going across the sea, to heaven knows where."

"I know where I am going," I replied. "New York is to have the honour of my presence for awhile. My plans are not fully formed yet, and—"

"And Harry is very rude, Miss Ormsby, to be curious about them," his cousin said. "I am afraid I shall never teach him manners."

Somehow or other, on that journey I learned a good deal about Hugh Meredyth. He was wealthy and free, much sought after by manoeuvring mothers and aspiring daughters. It was from Harry's unceasing rattle that I gathered it all, and a good deal more about the Meredyth family. I asked after them, and was told they were all well, and would be glad to hear that the cousins had been of any service to me; and then I sighed and called myself a fool in my own mind. What were all these kind people to me? Was I not going away from all that had made life pleasant here, never to see them again, in all probability?

The journey came to an end all too soon, and at the station I was taken care of in the kindest fashion, and news of the *Aphrodite* sought for; which inquiry resulted in the intelligence that her departure was delayed till the next evening, making it necessary for me to stay in Liverpool for the night.

"Do you know of any hotel, Miss Ormsby?" asked Hugh Meredyth.

And I said forlornly that I did not.

"Will you permit us to select one for you? I am well acquainted with Liverpool."

I thanked him, and we were driven to a comfortable house, and the magic of the earl!

name brought into play, and I was received as if I had been a duchess.

"We don't go till to-morrow, either," Hugh Meredyth said, when they had seen me installed in a cosy little private room. "You will allow us to come and see you on board."

"Why can't we stay here, and then we shall be on the spot?" asked Harry, and was rewarded with a look and gesture that silenced him at once. I wondered a little why they could not till they were gone; and I was left alone with the books and magazines that Mr. Meredyth had ordered up for me, and then I understood the delicacy that thoughts of my reputation and my solitary position, and would do nothing that would call any attention to me in any way.

My cavaliers were waiting for me when I made my appearance the next morning to see me safely on board the *Aphrodite*, and to wish me a safe voyage across the Atlantic. I was not allowed to pay any bill, Harry protesting most emphatically against any such proceeding on my part.

"The pater would be awfully angry if he thought I had let you do such a thing, Miss Ormsby," he said. "We always use this house, and you are my guest, like you were in the railway carriage, you know!"

There was no gainsaying his boyish generosity, and even Hugh did not frown him down now. If I had been a queen starting on a royal progress there could not have been more injunctions given to the captain of the *Aphrodite* to take care of me and my belongings, and my eyes were full of grateful tears when the moment of adieu arrived.

"Good-bye!" and my hand lay in Hugh Meredyth's strong grasp, and his eyes looked into mine, and I would have given the whole world, if it had been mine, to have been going to stay in England with him. It was all very unmaidenly and wrong, but I was only a girl, and had so few to love in my quiet life. I could hardly speak when Harry came to say the words.

"Good-bye," he said, "I hope you will have a jolly time on board. I wish I was going too, that I do. Good-bye," and my hand was nearly wrung off in his hearty grasp.

"Come, Harry," said his cousin, and held out his hand again.

So Hugh Meredyth's was the last hand I touched in England, and his face the last I saw as the *Aphrodite* steamed away to begin her voyage. I bent my head and wept under the shadow of my thick veil—almost the bitterest tears I had ever shed—as I thought that perhaps, indeed, in all probability, that parting wave of the hand would be the last I should ever see of the man who had come to engross so much of my thoughts.

(To be continued.)

THE Treasury of the German Empire is to undergo its annual inspection in a few days. Every New Year three important financial officials visit and verify the Imperial funds kept in the Julius Tower at Spandau, and divided into four sections—that intended for the expenses of fortifications, the share for pensioners and invalids, that set apart for building the Parliament House, and the war portion, which now amounts to £6,000,000.

A GORGEOUS Millionaires' Ball is to be given in New York by the Astor family who are Transatlantic merchant princes, and the festivities are expected to eclipse Mrs. Vanderbilt's famous entertainment of last season. It will commemorate the centennial of the first Astor emigrant from Holland, and everything will be arranged in eighteenth-century style, the rooms being furnished to match, and the fireplaces fitted up with huge log fires. Supper will go on all the evening, served in a service of sterling silver and coin gold, costing £35,000, and the wine set out on a table of repoussé silver worth £8,000.

THE SCARLET HOOD.

Take out the little scarlet hood

With faded ribbons on it.

To you it seems a time-worn thing

Not worth a rhyme or sonnet,

To me it is a treasure dear,

My baby's first was bonnet.

"And is she dead?" you ask "my friend,"

As we sit down at leisure

"Since it is twenty years or more

That you have kept this treasure,

It must be, or you could not look

Upon it with such pleasure."

Oh! no, our darling did not die,

Although we came to fear it

Since, through another's careless act,

She was so very near it.

We sent our little one to take

Her daily ride to cheer it.

She loved to see the blooming fields

So rich with balmy clover,

And oft would try to clamber out,

Our darling little rover;

That morn, her small nurse leaving her

Her little coach fell over.

We brought our speechless darling in!

As dead, with sighs and weeping,

But God was good, and gave again

Our baby to our keeping;

Her little hood had saved her life

And she was sweetly sleeping.

M. C.

YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

CHAPTER XIII.

"THEY ARE LUSHINGTON'S!"

HUGH MACDONALD sprang out of the carriage with an exclamation of delight as they arrived at the Chestnuts, and found Dudley Wentworth standing on the steps.

"This is jolly!"

"I found it was not necessary to join till to-morrow," said Dudley, leaning forward to speak to his father, "so I sent down my things under Minton's charge, and came here to see you settled. I hope you are not tired with your journey," turning to Sibel, with whom he had forgotten to shake hands.

"Not at all—that is, only a little," she said, incoherently, as he helped her out of the carriage.

Her hand rested in his for half a minute, but he did not press it or try to retain it, and his manner, though very courteous, was equally distant.

He led his father through the hall, panelled with dark oak, and with pillars of the same, on which the light of the wood fire glistened cheerfully, to the library, where his favourite chair, imported from the Chase, was ready to receive him.

"It all looks very comfortable," said Lord Wentworth, looking round the cheerful room, in which Dudley had taken care to place many of the familiar objects from the Chase, such as the large brass inkstand which had been given to him years ago by his own tenants, the family Bible with the jewelled clasps, and the dates of bygone generations of Wentworths on its fly-leaf, the picture of his dead wife, which looked down on him from over the mantelpiece, most of his favourite authors, and one or two landscapes which he especially prized. "Miss Fitzgerald shall give us a cup of tea, and then we shall feel quite at home."

Sibel seated herself in front of the Sutherland tea-table, drawing off her gloves, whilst Hugh busied himself with the sugar tongs. Already she felt that if it had not been for her one fatal mistake she could have been very happy in this quiet home.

There was not the splendour of Wentworth Chase, but unostentatious comfort in its place, and to her unsophisticated mind it seemed

pleasanter to be waited on by one irreproachable-looking servant such as Manser, the grave butler, than by a crowd of footmen in gorgeous liveries.

Hugh, after taking Lord Wentworth's tea, sat down on a low chair by Sibel's side, lounging in his graceful foreign fashion almost at her feet. His face was peculiarly handsome, lighted up by a pair of passionate dark eyes, which he had inherited from his Spanish mother. They were sure to get him into mischief some day, for, like an inflammable fuse, wherever they rested they were apt to set light. His hair was jet black, his complexion dark but clear, his brows nearly met in a level line above his straight nose, and, although he was only nineteen or twenty, his tenderly curved upper lip was already shaded by a moustache.

"You go back to Christchurch to-morrow, Hugh?" said Dudley.

"Yes. I wish I could stay longer; but I've got to grind before Easter."

"If you don't start till the afternoon you will be able to show Miss Fitzgerald about the place. It will be better than finding out the best ride for herself after you've gone."

"Yes; but are there any horses?" he asked, quickly.

"A few; we are not quite beggars. May Queen for Miss Fitzgerald. I thought you might be ambitious of something bigger than your pony," casting a glance towards the tea-table; "and Acorn for you. You must keep him up to the mark whilst I am away. As to carriages, we have nothing but the brougham and the dog-cart. I wanted to keep the pony-carriage, but I didn't know what to put into it. I am afraid you will want it terribly in the summer," turning towards Sibel.

She raised her head.

"I shall be so delighted with May Queen that I shall never want to drive; and if I did, perhaps Hugh would take me in the dog-cart."

"If I only get the chance!" his eloquent eyes flashing with pleasure.

"If you don't mind the trouble, perhaps you will let me show you the house, I want to know if I have done right about your rooms?"

Sibel rose with a fluttering heart, and followed him "upstairs and downstairs, and in my lady's chamber," scarcely daring to speak, except when directly appealed to, and yet noting wherever she went some sign of his care and kindly consideration for others.

Her bedroom, which was hung with pale blue, opened into a pleasant little sitting-room decorated with the same colour. A fire was burning in the grate, books were lying on the table just as if the room had been lately inhabited, and in the centre stood a vase of her favourite flowers, the fragile snowdrops.

She bent over them admiringly.

"Just as if Mrs. Upperton knew how fond I was of them."

"I thought they might help to make you feel less desolate," he said, quietly. "After a cheerful house like the Lodge I am afraid you will feel this very lonely."

"I hated my life at the Lodge," looking down at a book, whilst the colour rose in her cheeks; "but I feel as if I should love it here!"

"I hope you won't be disappointed. You won't be quite deserted," he added, after a pause; "for, with my father's permission, I gave Lushington *carte blanche* to come whenever he liked."

"Oh, why?" in startled dismay.

He looked at her in grave surprise.

"Because you were kind enough to take pity on my father, we did not mean you to be shut up like a nun."

"But I would much rather," with suppressed eagerness. "I don't want visitors—I shall be quite happy with Lord Wentworth."

"For how long? Till the end of the week, when the novelty will be worn out!" answering himself, with some bitterness.

"Till the end of the year, and the year after that. Mr. Wentworth, I really mean it; but you don't believe me," looking up at him with her wistful eyes.

He looked away from her, and stooped to pick up a glove which she had dropped.

"How can I?" he said, slowly. "It's against nature. If you like a man well enough to marry him you must want to see him more than once a year."

"You might marry him, because"—scarcely daring to whisper it above her breath—"because it was best."

"Yes," looking her sternly in the face; "but it is never 'best,' only a question of barter and sale if the heart is not in it. I should be sorry to think that one of my oldest friends was a victim to such an arrangement."

She sank down into the depths of a comfortable-looking armchair, for fear lest he should see how she was shaking.

"This is probably the last opportunity I shall have of speaking to you in private," he said, after a pause; "as I shall leave the house before you are up to-morrow."

"At what time?" she said, eagerly.

"About half-past seven."

"I shall be down," in a low voice.

"I wouldn't if I were you; you will find the days long enough without getting up to stretch them. However, all I wanted to say is that Mrs. Upperton will take all the trouble of the house off your hands; as to other things you will give your orders, and the servants will look upon you as their mistress. If you want company you can sit with my father, who will always be glad to have you, and when you wish to be alone you can come up here. Do you like any other rooms better? I only chose these for you according to my own fancy, and they may not suit you. They face the south, so you will have plenty of sun."

"I wouldn't change them for the world—I think they are charming."

"That is well. Of course, if you wish to invite a friend now and then to stay with you, you can; and mind you accept any invitations from the people in the neighbourhood, or else you will be feeling dull and want to go back."

"No, as long as Lord Wentworth will keep me, I shall stay."

"You have not tried it yet," with a grave smile.

"I thought you had gone without saying good-bye to me," she said suddenly, with a desperate craving to break the barrier of ice between them.

At first he did not answer, and her heart failed her, but after what seemed to her a wearisome interval, he said very gravely, "I did that long ago."

"But I saw you again?"

"Yes, I know." Then he went slowly to the door.

"Twice I met you, once at the stile, and again when you were running away—you may think it strange, but I want to forget them both."

There was a sound of a closing door, and she knew that he was gone. In bitter disappointment she sprang to her feet.

"Oh, why have I come!" she cried to the inanimate things around her. "Why have I come if it is to bring me nothing but pain?"

And yet when the night came, and she laid her head upon the pillow, she blessed Heaven for having given her the chance of a home with Dudley's father. At half-past six she was up and dressed, fearful lest the time should slip away without her knowing it. Feeling half-ashamed of being up, she stole softly downstairs, meeting no one on the way. The breakfast-room was empty, but preparations for a solitary breakfast were already apparent at the upper end of the snow-white cloth. She sat down by the fire, with a strong inclination to run upstairs, and put herself to bed again.

Manser's eye she was afraid of meeting, and how could she ever find courage to bear the surprised look in his master's? It was too early for the newspaper, and she had nothing to occupy herself with, not being one of those industrious people who always carry a bit of knitting in their pockets. Presently she could bear her idleness no longer, and went into the library to find a book. A housemaid was busy

sweeping, and nearly jumped out of her skin, as Sibel's small figure appeared through a cloud of dust. Catching up the first book she came across, which happened to be Nuttall's Dictionary, she beat a hasty retreat to her armchair. There she sat for some time unmolested, except for the bringing in of various items of the soldier's breakfast by the noiseless Manser. At last there were the sounds of wheels on the gravel, and the dog-cart, driven by a smart-looking groom, drove up to the porch—the hands of the ebony clock on the mantel-piece pointed to half-past seven, and at the same moment the door was hastily thrown open, and Wentworth walked into the room, with an unlighted cigar in his mouth, and a fur-lined coat over his arm.

"Not much time—just give me a mouthful of grill, and a cup of coffee—mustn't lose the train on any account, Sibel!"

He threw the cigar down on the table, the coat on a chair, and stared, whilst Manser, thinking breakfast was much more important than anything else, poured out the coffee and put a grilled bone on his master's plate. Sibel stood up, and then came shyly forward, with her book in her hand.

"I had no idea you were such a bookworm. Did you get up on purpose to read it?" taking it from her hand. "By Jove, a dictionary!"

"Eat your breakfast—you said there was no time!" her heart beating fast, her cheeks crimsoning under his puzzled eyes.

He took her advice, swallowed a few mouthfuls, drank his coffee off at a draught, and then after wiping his mouth carefully, threw down his napkin, and stood up for Manser to help him into his coat. His face was grave and very thoughtful, as Sibel watched him surreptitiously from out of the corner of her eye.

"Just fetch me a Bradshaw"—to Manser—"on the writing-table in the library, and put it in the cart." The butler departed, and for one precious minute they were left alone.

"Good-bye," he said gently, holding out his hand.

She put hers into it, but her tongue seemed tied.

"Take care of the old man for me," his lip trembling, under his fair moustaches, for he knew that the parting which he had just been through upstairs must be for years, and might be for ever. "Good-bye and Heaven bless you," her hand clasped tight in both of his—his dark eyes fixed intently on her quivering face.

Her left hand fumbled nervously with the snowdrops in the front of her dress. "Will you—take them?" she gasped.

"Yes, dear, that I will." Then a shadow came across the brightness of his face, his mouth grew stern, and his eyes proud. "I forgot—they are Lushington's," and one by one, they fell from his fingers down upon the carpet.

"I could have loved you, child," he said, sternly; "but I will share you with no man!" Then he turned on his heel and was gone. Hugh came rushing down the stairs, and clambered into the dog-cart as Dudley was in the act of driving off.

"If you try that dodge too often you'll break your neck some day."

"I'd risk it for the sake of coming with you," a swift glance of the Spanish eyes expressing their owner's devotion.

CHAPTER XIV.

"TWO GOOD BYES!"

AND this was all that poor Sibel got, through trying to outdo the early worm—a final farewell, which might ring in her ears till the last day of doom, and yet never ring without bringing a fresh sting! For the rest of the day she felt as limp and dejected as her rejected flowers, which were left on the floor, and trodden under foot of man.

Hugh came back from the station in time to breakfast with her, and dominated by the butler's eye she forced herself to eat and drink, lest her want of appetite should be ascribed to the right cause. As it was Macdonald's last day he insisted upon taking her

out for a ride, according to Wentworth's suggestion. The March wind was sharp and chill; but there was some pleasure in braving it, and climbing the pleasant Berkshire hills, which next month would be clothed in a mantle of green foliage. They made a striking pair, as they rode side by side on their thoroughbreds, each riding with ease and grace, as if long accustomed to the saddle, each in the prime of youth and health, with a beautiful face on which sorrow had stamped its seal.

"I shall always call you Sibel now," said Hugh, putting one hand on his saddle, and leaning forward so as to give his companion the full benefit of his eyes, into which he had put an entreaty which seemed at variance with the coolness of his words! "It would be ridiculous to do anything else. I am a year older than you, and this is the first day I have thought of it."

"But everyone who is older than I am doesn't call me by my Christian name," smiling at him good-humouredly.

"No, but living under the same roof with you makes all the difference. There are only two positions left for me—that of brother or lover. I choose the first, because—because the other would be useless."

"You are very good. But why not friend?"

"The two are synonymous. A man must have the heart of a jelly-fish if he could be your friend, and nothing more."

"Then I know a number of jelly-fishes."

"Who are they? Dudley for instance, who looks a different man since—since—"

"Hush! you are talking nonsense," holding up her hand warningly. "Mr. Wentworth has had enough to try him—parting from his father—leaving the Chase—losing his fortune."

"And something else too," with a knowing glance. "I was away, but Phil kept me well posted up, and I had my eyes wide open when I came back."

"You generally have; I believe you are awfully proud of them," bursting out laughing.

"Sibel!" in an accent of the deepest reproach.

"Call me a conceited ass—but you can't think it. I am proud, and I thank Heaven for it, when I see the turf-hunters at Oxford, but conceited I never was. I shouldn't care if I were one big small-pox mark from head to foot—only the women would hate me."

"I am glad you are not, though I shouldn't hate you—you are so unlike anybody else that—"

"Well? Don't be afraid to say it—I am down in the mouth and can't be stuck up," turning eagerly towards her.

"That—a charm is too strong; but there is something nice about you."

"Thanks!" taking off his hat, and making a profound bow. "Sibel, you are an angel."

"And you an impudent young man!"

"Not impudent, only given to speaking the truth, a habit to be encouraged between brother and sister."

"Yes; I should never have the courage to send a lie all the way to India. Guy, I am sure, would find it out long before it got there."

"One in India, the other in England; I shan't be *de trop* as a brother," said Macdonald, musingly.

"I have never given you leave to be anything of the kind," she said, with a mischievous smile.

"All right, I'll be the other thing, and you can't be angry, because I shan't be able to help it," looking inexpressibly winning as he laughed up into her face. "I was doubting between the two; but, upon my word, I think the last will be the nicest. I wish you would answer me one question—with a wistful glance—"just one, it is positively necessary for my future peace of mind. Will you?"

"Can't tell till I know what it is."

"I've scarcely the courage to ask it."

"I never knew you a coward before."

"But if you flew into a passion, what should I do?"

"Ride home without me."

"Impossible; I couldn't be such a cad!"

"Then you would have to bear it."

"I don't think I could; but I suppose I must. Now for it."

"Excuse me, I don't want to hear it," and she put May-Queen into a sharp canter.

"Too bad. Fancy sentiment at this pace!" as they hurried past the hedges, where the first green buds were beginning to make their appearance.

"Just what I wanted—to put a stop to it," she called out, with a little laugh.

On reaching the Chestnuts she inquired anxiously for Lord Wentworth, but he had not come down. Just as she was going into the dining-room for her *little-dittle* luncheon with Hugh, Sandon appeared with a message from his master to the effect that he hoped Miss Fitzgerald would excuse him till four o'clock, when he hoped to be able to take tea with her in the library. If she wished for the carriage she was to order it.

Touched by his kindly consideration for her in the midst of his many trials, she begged the valet to tell him on no account to hurry down-stairs unless he felt inclined for the exertion. She could make herself perfectly happy with an interesting book, and did not wish to go out in the carriage.

After luncheon she was standing by the window in the library watching the snowdrops shivering in the cold wind, when Hugh came in, already arrayed in his great-coat with the broad fur collar, which was especially becoming to his foreign style of beauty. He put his hat and stick on a chair, and came up to her.

"Two good-byes in one day," she said, trying to smile, as if it were a joke, "is too much for one person."

"I was wondering whether you would have got up for me at that unearthly hour of the morning?"

"Perhaps I might do even more than that for a friend!" anxious to disparage the effort.

"And what would 'the more' be?"

"Depends upon what was wanted. Have you seen your uncle?"

"It was Hugh's habit to call Lord Wentworth his uncle, for want of a better designation, although he was no relation."

"Yes; poor old fellow!" his face softening with real feeling. "You and I must contrive to keep him up till Dudley comes back."

"I'll do my best; but I am so afraid he will be dull alone with me."

"Or you alone with him! Never mind, I shall soon be back to help you. Sibel, it was a strange thing your coming to live here, as if you were meant to be one of us really,"—looking down at her thoughtfully.

"It was Mr. Wentworth who thought of it; he is so kind to every one, he forgets nobody,"—stooping down as if to count the buttons on the front of her dress.

"There never was anyone like him," rejoined Hugh, enthusiastically. "I always live in the hope that some day I may render him a great service. It's all nonsense, of course, and the opportunity will never come; but I feel as if I should like it better than anything else."

"It isn't nonsense," looking up at him with sudden sympathy. "Are you such a poor, miserable creature that you never can be a help to anybody?"

"No; but nobody wants me—I am a necessity to no one," his voice sinking.

"Indeed, but you are. I shall count the days till you come back, and Lord Wentworth looks on you as his second son."

"Do you really mean it, without humbug?" his olive cheek flushing.

"Yes, as seriously as possible; and at the Lodge, Phil is devoted to you."

"And Rose?" he said, softly, more as stating a fact than asking a question.

"Yes; and dear little Rose. She is worth all the rest,"—the tears coming into her eyes, as she reflected that in all likelihood she would never see her sweet face again.

"I thought so till you came," he said, with strange frankness.

"Then you must think so still. I hate inconstancy."

"Especially when it is your own fault?"

"Yes, especially then," with uncompromising gravity.

"There's the cart," as the unwelcome sound of wheels was heard once more on the gravel.

"Good-bye! I am awfully sorry to leave you; but remember, one line to Ch. Ch. will always bring me back. Good-bye!" squeezing her hand in a most affectionate grip. "I don't know quite which it is to be," with a laughing look into her eyes. "Is it brother or lover?" as he carried the little hand to his lips.

"Neither!" as she tore it away indignantly; but no one could be long angry with Hugh, and the next minute she was waving it forgivingly to him from the window.

She watched the dog cart as long as she could, and turned to the fire as if for company when it had quite disappeared. In spite of her persistent denial she *did* feel lonely, and she could not disguise the fact from herself, as she sat on a low stool by the fender gazing at the flames with wistful eyes.

Dudley had gone, and the separation was complete, for even in his last good-bye he had neither forgiven nor forgotten. Could she have wished him to do either? Wouldn't forgiveness or forgetfulness have shown that he never cared? And yet to know that he had cared was, perhaps, the bitterest thought of all. The tears were in her eyes, when the door opened, and she was recalled from her own sorrows by a sight of the snow-white head and patient face of Dudley's father.

He gave her a pleasant smile as she went eagerly forward to meet him.

"We must take care of each other now, my dear, as there are only two of us left. Do you think we can be trusted not to quarrel?" as he sat down in his chair, and stretched out his hands to the blaze, as if sorrow had chilled the marrow of his bones.

"I shall grumble at nothing if you will only treat me just like a daughter. Do you think you could?"

He smiled down on the pretty wistful face, which was raised so confidently to his.

"Do I think I could? I think it sounds very tempting. You shall read to me when my eyes are dim, you shall write my letters when I feel too lazy. I will tyrannize over you as if you were a paid drudge, and I were a second—second—I can't think of his name—but I mean somebody very bad."

"Tyrannize as much as you like, I shall not mind it a bit."

"You do not know what I am capable of. Landon could tell you something; but he is very good, and bears with me."

"I fancy that most people would," still looking up into his thin, patrician face with admiring eyes.

"Yes, for a time!" with a sigh, as he leant back in his chair.

CHAPTER XV.

THE COUNTESS OF WINDSOR.

THE days passed very quietly at the Chestnuts. The people of the neighbourhood had rejoiced to hear that Lord Wentworth was about to give up the Chase and establish himself on his small estate in Berkshire, but out of true delicacy of feeling they would not be too eager to welcome him, knowing that the change was matter of necessity, not choice.

When the magnates of the county had decided that the proper interval had elapsed, they drove up to the door and left a heap of cards. No one was admitted, for Lord Wentworth did not feel equal to the exertion of entertaining visitors, and Sibel would not offer to do so by herself.

There was much gossip in the neighbourhood about her position in the peer's household. Spiteful people, who were jealous of her beauty, declared that she was nothing but an ordinary companion, and it would be absurd to include her name in an invitation to Lord Wentworth, whilst the young men, who had happened to see her mounted on May-Queen, and followed by a groom; said it was not the habit of governesses to ride about the lanes on a mag-

nificent thoroughbred, and such a face and figure would be a perfect godsend at the Easter balls.

The dowagers of the neighbourhood had many anxious consultations on the subject, but at last came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to ignore the girl's existence. Nobody knew who she was, or where she came from; and if she was nothing but a poor dependent it would be a mistake to lift her above her proper sphere; besides which it was whispered that she was not bad to look at, and in that case they had sons to keep out of danger. So Mrs. Smith of the Hall, whose dance was to take place in the Easter week, sent a card to Lord Wentworth, and none to Miss Fitzgerald.

"It seems as if they had made a mistake between us," said Lord Wentworth with a smile, as he held the card between his finger and thumb. "I am to go and dance—and you are to stay at home and sit still. What a ridiculous world it is!"

"Perhaps they did not know of my existence," and Sibel looked up with a slight flush on her face.

"I am afraid I have been selfish and kept you too much to myself," he said, gravely. "You shall come with me to Lady Windsor's this afternoon—that is," he added with his usual courtesy, "if you do not object?"

Sibel gave a willing assent, rejoiced to find that he was beginning to emerge from his solitude at last. He might do it to-day for her sake, but when he had taken up the old habit of going into society, it might grow less distasteful to him after a time, and she was in hopes that he would continue it for his own. As to the Smiths' one of the party certainly knew of her existence, for she had met the eldest son, Octavius, at the Rectory.

Mrs. Shaw, the rector's wife, had introduced him to her, and after talking over a cup of tea, he had gone so far as to offer to walk back with her to the Chestnuts, on the plea that it was getting late for a young lady to be out alone.

She had declined the escort rather coldly, as she had taken a great dislike to him, and suspected that his civility was the offspring of impertinence. Now she was angry at the slight that was put on her, and determined that if ever she had the misfortune to meet him at a dance, she would find no room for his name on her card.

The brougham was ordered at three o'clock, and with strict punctuality, Lord Wentworth appeared in the hall as the hour struck. He held out his ungloved hand to help Sibel into the carriage, treating the young girl with as much deference as if she had been a descendant of Royalty.

As they drove past the blossoming hedges, he pointed out any object of interest that came in sight, and seemed so unusually bright and well; that Sibel thought how pleased his son would be if he could only see him!

The Court was a fine old place, belonging to the Earl of Windsor, with a park stretching for miles over an undulating country, and a splendid avenue of beeches planted in the time of the Wars of the Roses, leading up to a Corinthian portico of white marble, with acanthus leaves delicately traced round the capitals.

The Hall was of vast dimensions, the vaulted roof being supported by stately pillars which matched those of the portico. A crowd of footmen in liveries of purple and gold came to the door. And a major domo, who looked as dignified as a duke, led the visitors through a succession of daintily furnished rooms, fragrant with flowers, to an inner sanctum or smaller drawing-room, where the Countess was sitting on a low sofa, talking to some friends who had happened to drop in.

She came forward with a charming smile to meet Lord Wentworth.

"Allow me to introduce to you the daughter of my old friend, Sir Edward Fitzgerald," he said directly, with a wave of his hand towards the slight figure by his side. "She has been



["I FORGOT," SAID DUDLEY, STERNLY, "THEY ARE LUSHINGTON'S!"]

good enough to take pity on a lonely old man, and I recommended her particularly to your kindness."

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance," said the Countess, taking Sibel's hand in hers, and studying her blushing face with kindly eyes. "I only wish I had some one just like you to take pity on me, whenever Windsor is away from home. Lord Wentworth must spare you to me sometimes, for I, like himself, am often alone. Let me introduce you to my friends," turning to the ladies nearest to her.

"Miss Fitzgerald—Mrs. Spencer, Mrs. Smith—before long no doubt you will know them as well as I do."

Mrs. Smith shook hands cordially, thinking to herself that she had made a great mistake in ignoring this young lady whom a Countess delighted to honour, and Mrs. Spencer promised that she would soon bring her daughters over to the Chestnuts, to make Miss Fitzgerald's acquaintance.

Lady Windsor would not let Lord Wentworth leave till after tea, and led the conversation to such subjects as he was likely to be interested in, so that an hour and a half passed very pleasantly. Her son, the Earl, was coming home for a fortnight at Easter, when she hoped that Mr. Macdonald, whose father was one of her oldest friends, would spend a great deal of his time at the Court.

"You must not tempt him to desert us too much," said the Viscount, with his grave smile, "for as it is I am always afraid that Miss Fitzgerald may be frightened away by the dulness at the Chestnuts."

"Send her to me, whenever she wants a change," looking across the room to where Sibel was talking to Mrs. Spencer. "I shall be only too glad to have her. Shall you feel strong enough to take her to any of the dances this Easter?"

He shook his head. "Not strong enough, or else too selfish—I am not sure which."

"Then will you let me? Now that my own

daughters are married I shall be so pleased to have a pretty young girl to chaperon."

"You are too kind," with a courteous bow.

"I shall be deeply indebted to you. To tell you the truth, those balls were weighing on my mind. I felt that I could not sacrifice myself, yet it was barbaric to keep a young creature like that, with infinite capacities for enjoyment, shut up between four walls."

"Mrs. Smith's is the first on the list," lowering her voice judiciously.

"She is not going there."

"I am glad of it, I should like her to make her first appearance at our own. Let her drive over in the afternoon, and I think she had better sleep here."

"Very well, and I will send the brougham for her the next morning."

"You are determined not to spare her longer than you can help," and Lady Windsor smiled.

"Have I done anything wrong?" with a look of surprise. "Surely she will be ready to come back by twelve o'clock the next morning."

"She might be ready to go, but we shall have the house full of people, and they might not be so ready to lose her."

"Think of my empty one."

"I wish you would leave it quite empty, and come over with her."

"Impossible," rising from his seat. "If you knew what a thorough anchorite I had become, you would not wish it."

"I never heard of an anchorite, with a Hebe to wait on him."

"Perhaps you never heard of a Hebe who would be willing to do it."

"No, or the anchorite profession might become crowded. Must you go? Come and see me again soon, or you will find me rapidly developing into a recluse."

"I think the recluse might honour the anchorite," bowing over the delicate hand, with old-fashioned courtesy. "Sibel, if you

are ready, my dear, the carriage is at the door."

She came forward at once to say good-bye to the Countess, who whispered many pretty speeches in her ear. Mrs. Smith would have shaken hands again, but she only bowed in passing as she preceded Lord Wentworth out of the room.

"The next time they ask you to the Hall you shall have a cold, my dear," said the Viscount quietly, as he arranged a tiger-skin mat over her knees. "Those people are not to my taste."

"I am so glad you don't like them," she said, eagerly. "I quite detest her, and she must be odious to wear green gloves."

"There is something worse about her than the green gloves—an utter absence of refinement in manner, as well as mind. I am afraid I can be of very little use to you, but Lady Windsor has kindly taken you off my hands, and she will be a much better guide than I, amongst the social pit-falls."

"I don't want to be taken off your hands," said Sibel, with a loving glance.

"I am afraid you would fare very badly if you were left to me," with a sigh, as he leant back wearily.

When they reached home, there were several letters lying on the hall-table, amongst which there was one large square envelope directed to Miss Fitzgerald in a masculine hand.

The colour rushed to Sibel's cheeks as she picked it up, and carried it to her room. One glance was sufficient to tell her that the letter was from Major Lushington. Was it to say he was coming? Heaven forbid!

(To be continued.)

SOME of the Picture Galleries at the South Kensington Museum are now illuminated by the electric light. The "Sun" system is used, and has so far proved very satisfactory, the expense being the same as that of gas, with an increased amount of illuminating power.



[MOTHER AND CHILD—MUTUAL CONFIDENCES.]

NOVELETTE.]

VERNON'S WARD.

CHAPTER I.

COSY bachelor chambers in London, not very far from Piccadilly, one night in early spring, when the London season had barely commenced, and the weather was cold enough to make a fire pleasant. The said fire burnt bright and clear, and two young men seated near its cheerful warmth were lazily puffing away at two choice havannahs.

Both were good-looking. Their united ages would not have made sixty, but Ronald Thorne had had to make his own way in the world, while Ira Vernon was the only son of a wealthy baronet, and had but newly succeeded to his honours.

They were sworn friends. They had been schoolfellows, later on chums at college, and this was their first meeting since Ronald's return from Malta, where his regiment had been stationed for three years.

"And you're not married!" he remarked, coolly. "Well, Ira, I am surprised. I always thought you'd find a wife long before you came into the title."

"I hope I never may at all if I commit such folly as my father," said the young baronet, angrily. "Do you mean to say, Thorne, you never heard of his imbecility? I should have thought even at Malta the news must have reached you."

"I heard he married again, if that's what you mean. I wasn't particularly surprised. Sir George was not an old man; but for that accident he'd have lived for years."

"He was fifty-four," said his son, sententiously. "and he had been a widower fourteen years. Naturally he had a right to expect he'd continue so."

The young officer laughed; he really could not help it.

He had had almost a son's affection for Sir

George Vernon, and he thought his heir a little disrespectful.

"Well, he did not live long to enjoy his felicity. You have not told me yet whom he married."

"He married a widow."

"And a very suitable thing, too. I thought he had chosen a girl of eighteen, you seemed so indignant."

"I hate widows."

"Well, but perhaps your father didn't."

"He married a widow," went on Sir Ira, irately, "whom no one had ever heard of. He actually put in the place of my mother—an earl's daughter, by the way—his own landlady!"

Ronald whistled.

"It was two years ago," went on Sir Ira. "He had gone down to Hastings to spend the winter. I was at the Grange with two of my sisters for Easter, when one fine morning the news came that he was returning home with Lady Vernon."

"And what was she like?"

"You don't imagine we stayed to see. My married sister at once visited Lucy to make her home with her, and I set up these chambers. We wrote a statement of our intentions to the bridegroom, and he was evidently ashamed of his low-born wife, for he agreed with alacrity to our absence. I must say he behaved very well in money matters, but no money could make up to us for the disgrace he had brought on the name of Vernon."

"I really can't see any disgrace."

His friend stared.

"Would you like a common lodging-house keeper to be put in your mother's place?"

"How do you know she was common?"

"She wouldn't have taken advantage of his folly otherwise. Well, he didn't live long enough to be disenchanted, and he actually was infatuated enough to leave her the Grange for life."

"That's rather a blow to you."

"It's an awful blow. Women of that class often live to be a hundred. Fancy, I'm actually shut out from my own country seat!"

"Have you never seen her? Didn't you go to the funeral?"

"Of course I saw her. I went to the funeral, but I couldn't demean myself to speak to such a woman. To do her justice she never tried to force herself on me. She and her child kept to their own rooms while I was at the Grange."

"She has a child then?"

"Yes, a girl who probably drops her h's and flirts with the butler. I sent my lawyer to Lady Vernon to ask what sum of money would free my home of her presence."

"What reply did she make?"

"That she would not sell the house her husband gave her. She claimed a suite of rooms in the west wing for herself and her child, but said the rest of the house was entirely at my disposal."

"That was reasonable enough."

"I didn't think so. I have all the expense of keeping up the Grange. I can't let the place go to rack and ruin, and my father was so hasty in his wooing he forgot to make any settlement on her. In his will the estate is charged with an allowance of two hundred a-year, but that would not go far towards keeping up such a place as Vernon Grange."

Ronald Thorne looked steadily into the fire. His friend resented his silence.

"I suppose you think I'm to blame. You may have gone down to the Grange and fallen into the arms of your low-born stepmother, and expressed delight at the connection, etc., etc."

"I am not a hypocrite," returned the soldier, hotly; "only I suppose your father loved this lady and lived happily with her?"

"Yes," replied the baronet; "but as he only survived his wedding six months that's not saying much."

"I don't think I could bring myself to treat my father's wife as you are treating Lady

Vernon," said Mr. Thorne, slowly. "It's not like you, Ira. It's the first ungenerous thing I've known you do."

Sir Ira laughed.

"It touched me in my tenderest point—family pride. Then Isobel was so upset."

"But Lady Clare has her husband—"

"Yes, but she loved the Grange. She declared it would spoil Lucy's prospects. Lucy is not married yet."

"And thanks her stepmother for the fact?"

"I fancy so. I don't often go to Clareville. The women are always hard on me because I didn't refuse to pay the allowance. There was a sort of flaw in the way it was made, and I believe I could have refused to pay a half-penny."

"If you had refused you would have been a villain."

"My sisters seem to think I am a monster because I didn't refuse. You see, Ronald, there's no pleasing anyone."

"When are you going to try and please some beautiful young lady, and make your step-mother a dowager?"

Ira shook his head.

"Time enough yet."

The subject was dropped; indeed, the two friends had much else to think of.

Ronald's leave was for six months—after that he would be stationed at Woolwich, and already he had quite determined that life at Woolwich would be unendurable alone. A pretty little wife was a necessary accompaniment.

"I don't want an heiress," he confessed to Ira. "If she had a little money I shouldn't be too proud to refuse her on that account, but I want a wife who will love me for myself, and not be dull if we have to spend a few evenings in every week *à la d'elle*."

Ira shrugged his shoulders.

"A domesticated Hebe; it's a mistake, Ronald. You'll be bored to death!"

"Wait and see."

"Have you no one in view?"

"No one. I was only three-and-twenty when I went to Malta. I think I admired every girl I saw, as a matter of course."

"I wonder you didn't lose your heart abroad!"

"I didn't. I have come back quite heart-whole and fancy free."

"Come with me to Lady Ashburton's ball. I promised to look in for an hour."

It was barely ten. Ronald Thorne was easily persuaded, and the two friends started for the mansion inhabited by the Earl and Countess.

Very warm was the welcome one of them received. A baronet of old family, with twenty thousand a year, is apt to be a favorite in society, in spite of a few-born stepmother.

Ronald was a detrimental compared to his friend, and so the greeting bestowed on him was several shades colder.

But the gay young soldier was little troubled. He had less pride than Sir Ira, and cared far less for the world's opinion. His hostess having presented him to a partner he was soon dancing with zest.

The partner was a pretty little matron in the early years of widowhood. She was very affable and amusing, but Ronald had come late. Her programme was full, and she could not spare him another dance.

"Let me find you a partner!" she said, merrily. "You are looking at all the lasses as if they were strangers to you!"

"I have only just come back to England after a three years' absence, Mrs. Melville."

"Ah, then you feel strange!"

"Utterly bewildered. Who is that girl sitting down and looking as if she were bored?"

Mrs. Melville followed the direction of his eyes.

"That girl," she said, in comical reproof, "is a distant relation of my own."

"Really! I shouldn't have thought it!"

"You are dreadfully rude."

I mean she wasn't like you. I should say

you had taken more than your proper share of sunshine."

"You'd better tell her so."

Ronald took her to a seat, and departed, at her desire, to fetch her fan. Meanwhile the pretty little matron addressed herself to the girl whom Ronald had described as looking bored.

"Marguerite, I am going to introduce you to the most remarkable man you ever met."

"I don't want to know him."

"Listen! He wants to dance with you, because he thinks you look bored. I told him you were a distant relation of my own, and he rejoined reproachfully he should say I'd taken more than my share of sunshine, and left you all the shade."

Lady Marian Yorke smiled; she really could not help it. She was the greatest heiress of the day. She was almost morbidly afraid of being sought for her money, and this made her short and cold in her intercourse with strangers and robbed gay scenes like this of all their chances for her. She was not pretty; she had beautiful grey eyes and masses of soft brown hair, but the expression of her mouth was sad, and her face lacked animation.

"Where could he have lived?" she asked, with a bitter little laugh; "not to have heard my market value?"

"He has been abroad three years; now don't snub him, dear!"

For Ronald had returned, and the introduction took place.

There was no mistaking the simplicity of the young soldier's manner—no room to doubt his motives. He evidently looked at his partner as someone who received but little attention in society, and whom it behoved him to amuse.

Mrs. Melville had purposely started over her cousin's name, and so Ronald had no idea that he held on his arm the Lady Marguerite Yorke, the greatest heiress of the day.

"Are you as fond of dancing as your cousin?"

She shook her head.

"Fanny loves it better than anything else in the world—except her husband."

Ronald smiled.

"Is he here to-night?"

"Oh no, he is in India; she is going out to him next month. I shall miss her dreadfully."

"Then you do not live with her?"

"Oh no! I live with my guardian."

"And this is your first season?"

"How did you know that?"

"I think I guessed it!"

"Yes," said Lady Marguerite sighed, "and I hate it all. I would give anything in the world to go back to the country, and never see this hateful London again, only they won't let me."

Ronald looked kindly into her large grey eyes.

"They are quite right; you ought to see something of the world!"

"I have seen too much of it."

"Have you? Yet it is a beautiful world and England is the pleasantest place in it. I only came home last week from Malta, and though I have not a relation in the world, it made me glad just to be on English ground."

"Not a relation in the world!" and her voice softened, saying, pathetically. "Why, that is like me; I have nothing nearer than cousins."

"Friends are better than relations," said Ronald, with a strange eagerness. "I hope, before the season is over, you will admit me to the enjoyment of your friendship."

The dance was over, he resigned her to Mrs. Melville; but all through that evening the memory of those grey eyes haunted him. She was not pretty; many men called her positively plain, and Ronald Thorne had fallen hopelessly in love with her at first sight.

"Really," Sir Ira told him, as they drove home together to the pleasant bachelor chambers, where the soldier was such a welcome guest, "You made the running pretty strong for a man who dislikes heiresses, Thorne!"

Ronald stared.

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Only that you have been flirting desperately with the greatest heiress in England."

"I only danced with two ladies all night—one was Mrs. Melville, the other her cousin."

"And the cousin is Lady Marguerite Yorke, the possessor of the most beautiful estate in Blankshire, a town house, and several thousands a-year!"

Poor Ronald looked quite disconcerted.

"I am not fit to go into society, Ira; I need a lot of polishing up. Why, I took her for Mrs. Melville's poor relation; she seemed awfully dull and neglected."

"She snubs people so. If a man were to speak to her she imagines he wants her property, and arms herself to defend it. Poor girl, she is so awfully plain! She must know she'll be married for her money, but she needn't show she knows it quite so plainly."

"She never snubbed me."

"Didn't she?"

"And I think she has a sweet face—not beautiful, perhaps; but no one would call her plain."

"My dear Ronald, it must be a case of love at first sight! I only hope the heiress will be propitious. But, all the same, Lady Marguerite Yorke is no beauty, and nineteen people out of twenty would tell you she was plain."

Mrs. Melville and her cousin discussed the young officer with great interest over their dressing-room fire; or, to speak more correctly, Fanny talked and her cousin listened. Lady Marguerite found very little to say on the subject, only when Mrs. Melville suggested they would be sure to meet Mr. Thorne again shortly she positively smiled.

They did meet him again the very next night, but this time he did not seek Lady Marguerite, or pay her any attention; he stood leaning against the wall and looking almost moody.

"What has changed him so?" whispered Mrs. Melville. "He looks quite melancholy."

Lady Marguerite let her beautiful eyes wander in Ronald's direction, and there she blushed deeply. Pretty Mrs. Melville beckoned him with her fan.

"Why didn't you come and talk to us?" she asked him.

He did not answer, but her partner soon came to claim her, and then he stepped into the vacant chair beside Lady Marguerite.

"You are not dancing?"

"I don't think I am very fond of dancing."

"I wanted to tell you," said Ronald, going straight to the point, "of the stupid mistake I made last night. I fear you must have thought me terribly rude!"

There was a bright flash in her cheeks.

"What mistake did you make?"

"I fancied you were, like myself, alone in the world. I thought we had kindred tastes, and that we might be friends. I think I ventured to say as much."

Marguerite felt quite mystified.

"And have you found out since last night that we have not got kindred tastes, and that we can't be friends?"

"I have learned that you are the greatest heiress in England!"

"I am afraid it's true."

"It was a great blow to me."

"Why?" thinking him the strangest man she had ever met.

"I can't explain."

"I should like to know."

"Your face haunted me," he said, simply.

"I thought you were the sweetest girl I ever met. You seemed so sad and lonely, I ventured to hope I might cheer your path, and now I find that there is a fearful gulf between us, and we must be strangers."

Marguerite Yorke smiled, and her face grew almost radiant.

"Friendship bridges over any gulf," she answered; "but there is none between us, Mr. Thorne. You have thought far more highly of me than I deserve, but one part of your picture is quite true—I am sad and lonely."

Ronald looked at her with a world of tenderness in his dark eyes.

"And you will accept me for your friend and companion until—"

"Until you tire of the post?" with a wistful smile. "Yes, if you wish it."

"Until another claims a higher place in your regard, I should have said, had I been bold enough to finish."

She answered nothing, the band struck up the dance that has been called the Lover's Own, and together Ronald and Lady Marguerite moved forward to the strains of a charming dreamy waltz.

CHAPTER II.

FAR away from London and the gaieties of the season to a quiet country village, where the April air was sweet with the perfume of violets, and the woods were golden with yellow primroses. The glory of the village of Ardleigh was the Grange, which for centuries had been the home of the Vernons; it was a beautiful old mansion standing in picturesque grounds; its grey walls, over which the ivy clambered, its velvet lawn and fine old timber all gave it an artistic appearance which charmed the eye.

When Sir George Vernon brought his second wife home a bride no one had called upon her except the clergyman and the doctor (both unmarried men); the neighbours' one and all followed the example of the heir and his sisters, and kept rigidly aloof.

No one knew whether this troubled the baronet. He loved his second wife passionately, and the few months of their union sped happily by. His death was the result of an accident; he only lingered a few hours; there was no time for his children to come to him or for him to plead with them on his death-bed to be kind to his widow.

She felt it cruelly—the slights heaped on her by the young Sir Ira, the insulting proposal that she should accept a sum of money and rid the Grange of her presence. She refused, because Sir George's last wish had been that she should spend her life in the home where he had made her so happy, and because she longed still that a time might come in which she would be reconciled to her husband's family.

One of those first bright April days Lady Vernon sat in a low chair by the fire, her dress a rich black silk; a widow's cap upon her still luxuriant hair. Barely thirty-six years had passed over her brow, and she looked far younger even than her age through the delicacy of her complexion and the brilliancy of her eyes.

At her feet sat, or rather crouched, a young girl, barely seventeen, and who at first sight looked more like her sister than her daughter. Dorothea Hardy—called generally Dora by her mother and Miss Dolly by the whole household—had inherited to the full that mother's beauty.

She was a slim, graceful girl, with large, dark blue eyes, a complexion of the purest, creamiest white, small red arched lips, a broad open forehead, framed by masses of hair of the true golden brown that has grown rarer every year; her features were regular, and had a nameless stamp of aristocracy that her mother's lacked.

She heeded her beauty little. To Dolly the whole world meant her mother, and Lady Vernon had just broken to her the news that very, very soon she would be left alone.

"It can't be true," moaned the girl, in anguish. "Oh, mother, say it is all a mistake! How can you go away, and leave your Dolly, who has no one in the world but you?"

She little knew it was the thought of leaving her, and leaving her penniless, that was such torture to Lady Vernon as almost to have hurried on the end. She was dying of consumption. The end was very near; in a brief time there would be no one in all the world to

guard the beautiful child from harm and sorrow.

"My darling!" she said, faintly, "it is quite true. I put off telling you as long as I possibly could; I would not shadow your bright face too soon. Dolly, I have sent for Sir Ira."

Dolly rose, and stamped her pretty foot in anger. She was no heroine, nothing in the world but a tender-hearted girl, who loathed even the very name of the man who had treated her mother with such scorn.

"How could you?" she said. "He'll be glad—he'll come here exulting over our trouble!"

"I do not think he will do that. I think he is a just man, though he has seemed so stern to us. I have always felt if I could see him, Dolly, he would understand things better."

"It will be too late," sobbed Dolly. "Even if he's sorry he can't make up to you for his cruelty now."

"He can more than make up, Dolly; he can soothe my last earthly trouble by promising to befriend my child."

Dorothea's blue eyes flashed.

"Oh, do not ask him to do that, mother; I had rather beg my bread from door to door than live on Sir Ira's charity."

The mother looked at her and sighed. It had cost her something to crave a favour at her stepson's hands; but how could she leave her child alone, dowered as she was with this fatal beauty, and unconscious of all harm?

"What would you do, dear?" she asked, sadly. "You are so little, and so young."

"I could teach, or there is Daisy, mamma. We haven't heard from her for years; but I am sure she would be true to us. Daisy always loved me, mamma."

"Daisy is a great lady now," sighed poor Lady Vernon. "Besides, she may be married, and so have it out of her power to help old friends. No, Dolly, my darling, I have thought of everything, and there is nothing but to appeal to Sir Ira."

Dorothea pouted.

"Mother, darling, I can't bear to vex you; but I don't like it. I think I shall hate Sir Ira and his wife."

"I don't think he has got a wife, Dora."

"Well, his sisters then. There's a picture of Lady Clare in the gallery, and she looks horrid."

Lady Vernon put out one of her thin hands, and smoothed Dorothea's hair caressingly.

"You have been very happy here, dear."

"Very, mother," emphatically. "Sir George was as good to me as he possibly could be, and since he died I have had you all to myself. Oh, yes; I have been very happy."

"Then don't you think, out of gratitude to your stepfather, you owe it to him to be more charitable in your feelings towards his son?"

"Has he been charitable towards us, mother?"

"In word, no—in deed, yes, Dolly. I believe it was in his power to stop the whole of our little income."

Dorothea pouted again.

"Well, I'm sure he's an old horror."

"He's only nine-and-twenty, Dolly!"

"Twelve years older than I am, and I feel venerable sometimes. Why, mother, your stepson's only seven years younger than you!"

Lady Vernon smiled faintly.

"His father loved him well; of the three, Ira was far the dearest to Sir George."

"And you think he will come?"

A strange, wistful smile crossed the mother's lips.

"I hope so, Dolly."

"You won't want me to see him, mother?"

"Not if you would rather not."

At that very moment Sir Ira Vernon sat alone in his smoking-room contemplating a letter which bore the Ardleigh postmark.

"There's no one in the place likely to write to me. It can't be from that woman—I doubt if she can sign her own name, and this is a lady's hand."

He tore open the envelope, unfolded the letter, and read the few lines it contained:—

"Vernon Grange,

"April 2nd, 1880.

"DEAR SIR IRA.—The doctors tell me I am dying. We have not been friends, you and I, but I do not think you will carry your animosity so far as to refuse to come to me. In a few weeks—it may be a few days—your home will be free for ever from my presence; but first I beg of you to let me see you, and I do not think, for your father's sake, you will refuse her who was his much-loved wife."

"BEATRICE VERNON."

Sir Ira held the letter in his hand and read it again and again. He was very undecided as to his line of conduct. Was it a ruse to beguile him into intercourse, or was it what it professed to be—the dying request of a woman he had wronged in thought and word.

"I daresay it's only a trumped-up pretext to get to know me; perhaps she thinks I'm as great a temptation as my dear old father, and that she can catch me for her daughter as easily as she caught him for herself. I daresay that's it; but still I think I'll go—I'm proof against such machinations, thank Heaven, and, somehow, if my father's widow is dying I shouldn't care to leave her last wish ungratified."

Ronald Thorne was still his guest. The young officer was hopelessly in love with Lady Marguerite York, and it seemed clear to every one but himself that she returned his affection. The pretty romance had come to a deadlock since Ronald wouldn't propose, from scruples of his darling's wealth, and Lady Marguerite, not being one of the ladies who wish to establish women's rights, declined to usurp his prerogative and make the proposal herself.

"Ronald," said Sir Ira, a little gravely, "shall you mind being here by yourself for a day or two? I find I must go out of town on business."

"Shall I come with you, Ira? You seem bothered about something."

"I am bothered. I have received an urgent summons to Vernon Grange. I don't half like going, and yet I can't reconcile it to my conscience to stay away."

"Shall I go instead of you?"

"I don't fancy Lady Marguerite would put up with my 'friendship' instead of yours, thank you, old fellow."

Ronald groaned.

"It's not much use my seeing her; it only makes me wretched."

"Because you're an idiot."

"Thank you."

"Well, it's the truth. Anyone can see you have only to propose to be accepted."

"I'm not a fortune-hunter."

"Hang it, man, you can't expect her to propose to you, can you?"

"I don't expect anything."

"Cheerful! When do you go to Woolwich?"

"Next week."

"Does she know it?"

"Yes," and Ronald sighed. "She told me she had read it was a thriving town with a growing trade. I suppose she had looked it up in the *Gazette*."

"Which shows her interest."

"She said she daresay I should be very happy there, as if I could be happy anywhere without her!"

Ira laid his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"We've been friends, boy and man, for well-nigh twenty years. Ronald, don't let your happiness slip by you just for a scruple."

"But—"

"If she loves you," returned Ira, "do you think you've any right to let your cursed pride blight her life?"

"Then if you were me you'd—"

"If I loved any woman I should tell her so, were she as high above me as a princess; but I never shall love anyone, gentle or simple, Ronald. Now, when I come back from the Grange I shall expect an invitation to the wedding."

He telegraphed to announce his coming, and so when he alighted at the Ardleigh station, a fly was waiting. Since her husband's death the widow kept no carriage; the full complement of servants were at the Grange, but these were in Sir Ira's pay. The maid who had been engaged on her marriage was my lady's only retainer.

The baronet entered the fly and gave the order, "to the Grange;" then, as he leant back in the carriage, he tried hard to prepare himself for the interview which lay before him.

He had always fancied the *ci-devant* landlady as a red faced, buxom woman; he had no idea of her daughter's age, but pictured her a younger likeness of her mamma, midway between twenty and thirty. He felt pretty sure that Lady Vernon had sent for him to improve his charity for this young woman.

Had she only said as much in her letter he would have felt more kindly disposed towards her, as he could then have sent a written promise to continue to her the income enjoyed by her mother, and he would have been spared the annoyance of this visit.

The old housekeeper who had been his nurse was waiting in the hall.

"It is a good sight to see you here at last, Sir Ira! You are kindly welcome, sir. How are the young ladies?"

The stately baronet answered her with ready courtesy. Sir Ira always won golden opinions from his inferiors. Then there came an awkward pause. Upon his former visit, when he came to his father's funeral, the young master had laid down one law—the names of Lady Vernon and her daughter were not to be mentioned in his presence. Things might be different now, but still Mrs. Hill did not feel sure.

Her master himself broached the subject. "I have come to see Lady Vernon, Hill. Will you ask if she is ready to receive me?"

"My lady is quite ready, Sir Ira, and has ordered refreshment in the small dining-room, in case you had not lunched."

It was four o'clock. Sir Ira had lunched two hours before; he accepted a glass of wine more to detain Hill in conversation than from any desire for the stimulant.

"I suppose Lady Vernon is very ill?"

He knew that Hill was devoted to himself, that for his sake and his sister's she had bitterly resented their father's second marriage. He therefore expected her to speak coldly and disparagingly at least of his father's widow. He never forgot his surprise. Hill's eyes seemed suddenly to burn over with tears, and the old woman had to use her handkerchief freely before she could answer him.

"She's dying, Sir Ira," said the servant, gravely, "that's what it is. I've seen it myself for months, but she was always so bright and cheerful, I always fancied she didn't know it. She never got over the master's death, you see, Sir Ira."

A pleasant news for him, who believed she had married his father for love of gain!

"I suppose her own family are here, Hill?"

"There's no one here but Miss Dolly, Sir Ira."

"Ah! What is Lady Vernon's illness?"

"The doctors call it consumption, sir, but it seems to me just a fading away."

This did not quite agree with Sir Ira's ideas of a buxom widow, but he was still quite unprepared for the style of matron he was to meet.

Hill conducted him with great ceremony upstairs to a door before which velvet curtains were closely drawn, and pushing these aside, she motioned him to enter.

Half reluctantly he obeyed her. At first he fancied the room was untenanted, then he noticed a sofa drawn up to the fire, and approaching this he saw a slight, shadowy figure advancing to meet him.

Sir Ira felt as in a dream. [Despite the cruel ravages of disease this stranger was still far more beautiful than women of whose loveli-

ness he had heard praise. She was so slight and slender that her figure had almost a girlish grace, but the face had a mother's tenderness, and there were lines of patient sorrow about the mouth. At first sight he imagined her to be twenty-five, then, as he observed her more closely, he thought she might be thirty.

"It was very kind of you to come," and his stepmother put out her hand.

Sir Ira led her back to the sofa, placed her gently on it, and covered her with the fur rug before he answered,—

"I am grieved to see you like this! Believe me, until your letter came I had no idea you were not in good health."

She smiled, and then Sir Ira quite understood his father's infatuation.

"I have known it myself a long time, only I would not trouble you until I was quite sure."

"Are you quite sure now?" inquired the baronet, hastily. "Might not fresh advice and change of air do something? I need not tell you that—"

She understood the offer he hesitated to make, and interrupted him.

"They could do nothing; it is like your father's son to think of it, but I want nothing for myself at your hands. Before many days I shall be with my husband, and you will be free to bring home your wife to Vernon Grange."

"I have no wife."

"I know," she said, faintly; "and I am very sorry. If you had been married you might have looked more favourably on my request; now I fear you will think it both troublesome and irksome."

"I assure you I will do my utmost to grant it."

"You may have heard that I was a widow when your father met me."

He bowed.

"I am going to ask your kindness for my child," her voice almost broke. "We have not been friends, you and I. I know that my darling has not the slightest claim upon your generosity, but she is so young, and very soon she will be left alone. It is a mother pleading for her only child, who appeals to you—a mother, who was your father's much-loved wife."

Sir Ira never hesitated. He took the thin, white hands and clasped them reverently in his.

"Madame, I have done you a cruel injustice. I have wronged you harshly in my thoughts, but I will right that wrong in my care for your child. I promise you that your daughter's future shall be my charge; that she shall be provided for and guarded from all sorrow as carefully as though she were a little sister left to my care by my dear father."

An almost unearthly brightness came to Lady Vernon's face.

"I do not ask for that," she said, faintly. "You are a young man. It would be hard to put such a charge upon you. All I want is to know that you will not let my darling suffer from poverty, and that you will not make the bread of dependence too bitter to her."

Sir Ira started.

"You could think that of me! I have not shown you the best side of my character; but surely you cannot think me so base as that?"

Lady Vernon hesitated.

"I have spoiled her," she said, simply. "She was here when I was a two months' widow. She was all I had in the world, and I could not bear to cross her wishes. She is proud and wayward sometimes, but her heart is true and loving. Young as she is, she is staunch and loyal."

It never came into Sir Ira's thoughts that this was the description of a beautiful girl, not of a little child. Looking at the frail, lovely mother, he imagined her daughter to be a child—ten years old at the very most.

"I will teach her to love me," he answered, firmly.

"Have no fear, Lady Vernon, your daughter shall have a happy home here. It is true I have no hope to fill, in ever such a

small degree, your place to her, but all that brother could do for sister I will do for her!"

A long, long silence.

"You have robbed death of its stings," said Lady Vernon, softly. "I will tell Dolly of your kindness. I hope, oh, I hope, you will not find her very wayward."

Sir Ira pictured a little passionate child, wilful, but loving, generous, though wayward. He fancied he could get on very well with such a creature to pet and care for.

"It is a pretty name," he said, slowly.

"Her real name is Dorothea. I have had to call her Dora lately, but Dolly comes more readily."

"Shall I see her?"

Lady Vernon hesitated.

"I think not," she said at last. "She only learned the truth about me yesterday, and it has upset her sadly, poor child. I thank you from my heart for proposing it, but I think your meeting had better wait until—"

He understood her meaning—"until I am no more"—and rose to go.

"I am very glad I came," he said, as he held her hand in his. "New though it has been to find you thus, my visit has contradicted many of my mistaken fancies."

"I, too, am glad you have been," she answered. "You have smoothed my path to the grave and eased my heart of a heavy load. I shall rest well to-night, Sir Ira, now I know that Dolly will have a brother."

The baronet felt a strange mistiness about his eyes. He bent over the dying woman and pressed his lips to her forehead. Another minute and he was walking down the broad oaken staircase towards the door, where the fly waited to take him back to the station.

On his lonely journey to London more than once he beguiled his leisure by trying to fancy a child with a face like Lady Vernon's, and wondering how it would feel to have a beautiful little girl depending on him for love and sympathy, and calling him "brother" in sweet, childish treble.

CHAPTER III.

SIR IRA had a strangely sober face when he reached his cosy, bachelor chambers. He had been engaged to a dinner-party that night, but he never thought of going fresh from that death-bed scene, as it seemed to him. He was in no humour for gaiety.

He was sitting over the fire, smoking, wondering a little whether he should have to live at Vernon Grange, or if it would be possible for Dolly to form part of that cosy, bachelor establishment in London, when the door opened briskly, and Ronald Thorne entered.

The young officer put one hand upon Sir Ira's shoulder. There was a glad, bright light in his eyes as he cried,—

"I took your advice, old fellow, and it was the best thing going."

"Then Lady Marguerite has consented."

"Yes!" Mr. Thorne looked quite hot. "I told her I didn't care a pin about the money. We'd give it all to a charity if she liked, but she said she thought she'd rather we kept it."

"Sensible woman!"

"She isn't a woman!" indignantly. "She is barely twenty!"

Ira looked at him half-sadly.

"You've taken the disease, Ronald, evidently. I wonder what it feels like to be thoroughly in love as you are?"

"Haven't you ever tried?"

The baronet shook his head.

"I've flirted with plenty of women. I've even seriously liked a few, but I never yet saw a girl with whom I should care to pass my life. I never looked into a woman's face and coveted it for the ornament of my home!"

Ronald stared.

"It's very odd."

"I suppose so."

"You're one of the richest men about town. Surely it's your duty to find a wife."

"I'm going to have a daughter instead."

"What on earth do you mean?"

Ira grew grave.

"I went to the Grange to-day. Ronald, I never had such a shock."

"Was your stepmother worse than you expected. I can hardly believe that, for you certainly had no rose-coloured ideal of her."

"She was an angel," said Sir Ira, slowly. "One of the loveliest women I ever saw; a lady in thought and word. Just think how I have treated her, Ronald!"

"Well, you can change now."

"Not to her! She is dying."

"Why did she send for you?"

"To ask my protection for her little girl, soon to be motherless."

"And you replied—"

"I promised to care for the child as though I were her brother. I don't dislike the idea. I always had a fancy for children."

"How old is she?"

"I've no idea. The mother looked almost a girl herself. Poor little thing. I mean to be very good to her."

Ronald looked perplexed.

"You'll have to send her to school!"

"I shall not! I shall keep her with me, and buy her sixpennyworth of sweets every day!"

"But you can't, unless you encumber yourself with a governess! A bachelor can't bring up a girl! Besides, she's no relation to you! Anyone would think you meant to marry her! No Ira, you'll have to send your *protégée* to school, or get Lady Clare to take pity on her!"

"Isobel hates children!"

"That's unwomanly!"

"I know, but it's a fact. Besides, she resented my father's marriage too bitterly to be good to this poor little orphan. Well, we won't discuss my adopted daughter. Tell me your own plans, Ronald. I suppose you've made some?"

"We are going to be married in July, because Marguerite thinks Woolwich would be nice in summer."

"But you can't live at Woolwich!"

"We can!"

"But you'll be richer than your General. I made sure you'd sell out!"

"I shall not do anything of the sort! I told Marguerite that, and she quite agrees with me. She says she hates men with nothing to do."

"Well, you'll be considered most eccentric!"

"I expect we can stand that!"

Sir Ira went to bed soon after this, and his last waking thoughts were of Lady Vernon and her daughter. He was certainly not best pleased the next morning to receive a letter from his sister, Lady Clare, full of cruel speeches about their stepmother. He quite forgot that two days ago he would fully have shared Isobel's sentiments.

"I hear," wrote that august matron, "that 'that woman' is really ill, or that there is a fair hope that ere long you may be master of your own house. I write to caution you, dear Ira (knowing your Quixotically generous disposition), against weakly yielding to any appeals made to you by the usurper. She was penniless when our father married her, and she is sure to want to saddle our family with the support of her low-born child. I imagine she knows my sentiments too well to write to me, but I quite expect you will receive a letter of artful entreaty."

"Once for all, let me caution you to be firm; my father's step-daughter has no claim whatever on you. Let her keep herself, or be placed in some charitable asylum, but don't give her any encouragement to claim kindred with us."

The rest of the letter was on other topics, but Ira was fairly exasperated. He lighted a candle and burnt the offending pages before he joined Ronald at breakfast, and even then his brow was so cloudy that the young officer roused himself from his dreams of Marguerite to inquire if anything was amiss.

"Nothing," said the baronet, sharply; "only my sister has [written me a letter which

makes me doubt whether her heart is composed of the usual ingredients or the nether millstone."

"I thought you and Lady Clare agreed so well!"

"We do, I don't suppose any brother and sisters were ever more united than we three; only it occurs to me sometimes that Lucy and Isobel were born without feelings."

"Sir Thomas would not say so!"

"Sir Thomas is an idiot! He's just double his wife's age, and he worships her. I don't suppose he's the slightest idea Isobel took him because he chanced to be the richest man who proposed to her."

"Aren't you rather hard on her?"

"I don't think so!"

He sat down, later on, and wrote to his sister. Some nameless reserve made him ignore one chief point in her letter. He told her he had seen Lady Vernon, and there was no doubt her days were numbered; but of her petition to him, and his answer to it, he said nothing.

He enjoyed very little of Ronald's company in the days that followed; the young officer spent every possible moment with his *fiancée*; and when she was invisible he devoted his time to house-hunting at Woolwich.

Lady Marguerite Yorke's guardian had completely acquiesced in the fate she had chosen for herself. He had wanted her to marry a title, but he had come to have such strong doubts of her ever marrying anyone that he was quite willing to give her to this well-born young officer without further difficulty.

So that for once the course of true love ran smoothly. Ronald and Marguerite had met with little to trouble them in their courtship. They both love each other devotedly; neither had any very near relations to criticize their desire, and so their lot bid fair to be a very bright one.

The wedding was to be the very first week in July. An exacting country would probably afford Ronald a fortnight's leave of absence, which the young couple would spend at the bride's country seat; then they would return to Woolwich, and Mr. Thorne would again take up his military duties.

"I'm afraid you'll be dull while I'm away," he said fondly to Marguerite; "you'll have to get all your friends to come and see you."

"They wouldn't make up to me for losing you," she whispered; "but, Ronald, I have two friends I want you very much to know. They were very very good to me when I was a child; indeed, one of them saved my life. So you won't mind if they are poor, and a wee bit shabby."

"I'll welcome them if they come in rags, pet; but who are they?"

"My old governess and her daughter! You can't think how good Mrs. Hardy was to me, or how she put up with all my whims. We weren't so very rich ourselves then, I was plain Miss Yorke, not Lady Marguerite. My mother was dead, and my father was glad to place me with a lady who would keep me from year's end to year's end, and never expect me to go away for the holidays."

"Poor little Marguerite!"

"Oh, no, I was not! They were so good to me Mrs. Hardy was just like a mother, and I loved her little girl as though she had been my sister. I was with them ten years."

"Ten years!"

"It almost broke my heart when papa took me away and made me live with a prim old cousin of his—you see I was Lady Marguerite then—and so he supposed dear Mrs. Hardy was not good enough, though he had been glad enough to leave me there before. I suppose I had a horrid temper, Ronald! I sulked and stormed by turns, to make my new guardian let me go back to my dear old governess."

"And wouldn't she!"

"No; and, worse than that, she ascribed all my faults to Mrs. Hardy's influence, and she got papa's leave to break off the correspondence. For two years I was so closely watched I had

no chance of writing. When I could take the aw into my own hands my letter came back to me endorsed. "Gone away, left no address."

Her voice almost broke. Ronald understood that she had loved these friends of her childhood very dearly, and that there had been little sympathy or affection between her and the noble earl who, two years ago, had died, leaving her an orphan.

"We'll find them, never fear," said Ronald, confidently. "When we are married, my darling, we'll look for them together, and they shall come and stay with us as long as you like."

She rewarded him with a bright smile.

"That is just like you, Ronald—who is your favourite friend?"

"Ira Vernon!"

"Well, he's dreadfully stately and solemn, but I'll try and like him, for your sake."

Ronald professed a proper amount of gratitude, and would have passed on the promise to the person it more immediately concerned, but that when he returned home he found Sir Ira had started for Blankshire.

(To be continued.)

LORD RIFON'S position towards the European community in India, thanks to the Ilbert Bill, according to the native opinion, is curiously defined by a story going the round of the Calcutta bazaars—so the *Englishman* tells us. "Things look very bad here now. The Sahibs have put the Lord Sahib out of caste, and will not eat with him. When the Lord Sahib discovered this, he was much grieved, and sent for the Maharanees's son, hoping that he would be able to put him into caste again. But when the Rajkumar came down, and found that he had been brought into communication with an outcasted man, he was greatly enraged, and went of to Meerut in anger."

ROUGH WORKING.—Sometimes a rough tyrannical wooer will carry the day when more softly-spoken lovers have failed. Those who have read George Eliot's "Felix Holt," will remember how Felix, though himself a rough, unpolished workman, gained the love of a refined and delicately reared young lady, not by flattering, or even attempting to please and gratify her, but by chiding, depreciating, and almost despising her because she read Byron, and knew nothing of the heavy mental pabulum on which he himself was wont to feed. She at first was dreadfully vexed and offended; but by-and-by she came to believe that Felix had a grand moral idea, beside which her own was frivolous and insignificant; and striving to emulate his exalted motives and views of life, she made him her beau idéal, with, of course, the usual result. In theory, or in a novel, this is no doubt all very fine; this mode of procedure would be in most cases, to say the least, decidedly risky, and would very probably end disastrously. It is always safer to risk a little flattery. Neither a very long or very short period of courtship is advisable; it is desirable to hit the happy medium. Marrying in haste is certainly worse than a too protracted courtship; though the latter has its dangers, too, for something may occur at any time to break off the affair altogether, and prevent what might have been a happy union. It may always be concluded there is something wrong if Matilda is obliged to say to her Theodore, "Don't sit so far away from me, dear, and turn your back on me so; people will think we're married." A friend of Robert Hall, the famous English preacher, once asked him regarding a lady of their acquaintance, "Will she make a good wife for me?" "Well," replied Mr. Hall, "I can hardly say—I never lived with her!" Here Mr. Hall touched the real test of happiness in married life. It is one thing to see ladies on "dress" occasions and when every effort is being made to please them; it is quite another thing to see them amid the varied and often conflicting circumstances of household life.

WHICH WAS THE HEIRESS?

CHAPTER I.

Along the rugged, picturesque banks of one of the most famous of Scotland's rivers the sun was setting in a blaze of glory, bidding a fond farewell to the narrow valley lying below in a rocky gorge, through whose winding way the mysterious river foamed along like a silver thread. Those who are familiar with the grand and majestic scenery of the Highlands of Scotland will readily recall the dangerous beauty of that wild, strange river. It rushes on over its broken, rocky bed, now low and silvery in the summer droughts, with innumerable falls of silver-white spray, anon dark and threatening when the mountain rains pour their cascades into its bosom, but ever and always, in storm or calm, weird and dangerous, yet terribly beautiful.

On the banks of this far-famed river a party of sight-seers were gathered on the evening of which I write. They had chosen a very picturesque point for their observations. A narrow, serpentine line of shining railway ran along the only level ground, the lofty frowning banks rising in a sheer, precipitous wall on one side, on the other making an abrupt descent. Here, too, the bed of the stream broke up into a series of deep and beautiful falls, whose abundant spray reflected the brilliant lights of sunset in rainbow hues of indescribable glory. Nature was wearing robes of autumn livery—scarlet, and gold, and sober brown—against the graceful background of the white cliffs, and the soft sounds of September filled the air with a pleasant murmur—the rustle of falling leaves, the whirr of the startled pheasant's wing, the plaintive “tu-whit” of the partridge, the scream of the hawk wheeling homeward through the blue air to his nest in the inaccessible mountain crannies, the vesper hymns of the wild birds—all these sounds blended faintly with the continuous thunder of the falls, and the gay tones of the pleasure-seekers sounded almost discordant there, for nature's myriad voices are softer and more soothing than those of the human.

But women, as a rule, love the sound of their own voices more than the whisper of leafy woods and falling waters, and the majority of the sight-seers were women—young and pretty ones, too—who were sentimentalizing and flirting with the several specimens of the genus masculine there present.

There were two, however, from among the number of the sterner sex who sat apart from the crowd with the air of strangers. They did not belong to the party, and had not the ready tact with which ordinary tourists in their place would have ingratiated themselves with these days' companions in pleasure. On the contrary, these two men were distinguished by a certain air of cold reserve and hauteur for whose possession one nation alone is proverbial, and which stamped their nationality at once as Englishmen. Such indeed they were—men of birth and fortune.

“Look, Arthur, there is a heroine for you!” said the elder of the gentlemen, glancing up at the slim, dark figure of a young girl, who was climbing slowly the precipitous face of the bank above them by means of the rough foothold afforded by jutting stones and hardy shrubs rooted in clefts of the rocks. “That steep ascent requires a steady nerve and practised eye. Is she not brave?”

“Say rather foolhardy and daring!” exclaimed his companion, in tones of extreme disapprobation. “A single misstep, a moment's dizzy whirl of the head, and she must inevitably be hurled upon those stones beneath to certain destruction. I have no patience with these highland women. They seem to have a mania for unsexing themselves in one mad exploit or another.”

“You are too severe for the occasion, *mon ami*. You talk of women; this is but a girl's freak—the frolicsome escapade of a child.”

“It is the stature of a woman,” answered

the young man, following the tall, slight figure with cynical eyes.

“Yes, but the face of a child. I marked her closely to-day. She seemed not more than fifteen, and has a childish prettiness. The eyes especially were very frank and winning.”

The girlish subject of their remarks had stopped quite still at the beginning of their talk, as if to take breath, and stood leaning lightly against the swaying trunk of a slender tree above them, gazing carelessly down at the speakers. If they had been beside her they must have seen that a deep flush had coloured her cheek, and a gleam of scornful amusement leaped into her bright, dark eyes. The young man answered carelessly,—

“The eyes were much too large for her face, and the complexion too dusky for beauty. Judging from her olive tint, her long, black hair, and gazelle-like agility, she might be the descendant of some Spanish gipsy.”

“Hush, Arthur; I am afraid she has heard you. This fine, rare mountain air carries sounds a long distance.”

Arthur Delamere looked up quickly, and met the girl's gaze full. Even at that distance he could see in the large, dark eyes the quick blaze of scorn and contempt with which she had heard his words. But in an instant her face turned coldly away, and the small head created itself on the slender neck with a gesture of disdain.

“Proud blood spoke in that haughty movement,” said the elder man, smiling. “You have awakened her resentment.”

“Doubtless she will find means to avenge herself—women *always* do,” his companion answered carelessly, as he rose and stepped across for a nearer view of the falls. He was a handsome young fellow of twenty-six, and excusable, perhaps, for his caustic ill humour at venturesome climbers, for his left arm was worn in a sling, the result of his own reckless experiments in the same line several weeks previously. He had broken his arm, and narrowly escaped breaking his neck by falling over the face of a steep cliff, and his consequent confinement for many days at a stupid little railway station had somewhat soured the milk of human kindness in his manly breast.

He stood carelessly now, leaning on his cane, listening with a somewhat supercilious air to the idle talk of the groups about the falls, and noting with some admiration the beauty of the girl who sat near him, whose large blue eyes turned now and then with a half-coquettish air from the face of her manly companion to meet the gaze of the handsome stranger.

“Miss Rainsforth,” exclaimed the fair girl's companion. “Do look at your sister! She is in a most dangerous position! Had you not better call her down?”

The Englishman started and bent a keen glance on Miss Rainsforth's face as she looked upward.

In a moment her answering words floated clearly up to where he stood, as her companion's had done a moment before.

“There is no need for apprehension. Diana is very sure-footed, and would only laugh at the idea of danger. She does not know the meaning of fear.”

“So they are sisters!” commented Arthur Delamere. “Yet how very unlike in appearance. But Rainsforth—that is the name of the very man I am seeking! I must inquire whether these two girls are of that particular family.”

He stood still, however, a moment, unwilling to intrude on the animated conversation of the couple, and then suddenly remembering that he was standing rather rudely within ear-shot of their talk he turned and walked up the railway a short distance above the falls, knitting his brows in deep, absorbing thought.

Stopping again to look at the river his attention was attracted by the picturesque appearance of a great grey stone boulder rising several feet out of the river midway the stream.

The water was very low now, and a series of low, irregular stones formed a kind of rude, natural bridge across to the boulder.

Obedying an idle impulse, the young man descended the bank, and lightly stepping across the stones, climbed to the top of the great boulder and seated himself thereon. Thus isolated from the world on his lonely rock, with the shallow water lapping the stones at his feet, he relapsed into his musing mood, seemingly forgetful of everything around him.

How long he sat, with the soft murmuring of woods and waves in his ears he never knew, but suddenly there came an awful sound close about him—a sound more fearful than the thunder-peal, blood-curdling as the noise of battle. It was “the rush of many waters!”

The river had risen with the rapidity and suddenness so fearfully common to mountain streams, and was now pouring a great, noisy volume of several feet of muddy water all around his lonely eyrie, not half-a-foot from the level of the rock. Brave man though he was, Arthur Delamere sprang to his feet with an involuntary cry of surprise and horror, and surveyed his situation—a situation calculated to strike terror to the bravest heart, for death seemed to stare him in the face.

Midway the dangerous river, on the lonely boulder that had suddenly become a tiny island surrounded by a wild, swift torrent of water, his only hope of escape was to swim back to the shore where he had left his friend and the gay pleasure-seekers. He was an expert swimmer, yet the bravest would have hesitated before plunging into that rapid flood that hurried on to the fatal cascades, great black stumps of trees, together with all the debris gathered from the shores that it had begun to overflow. Delamere's proud lips whitened as his glance came back from that swift flood and fell on the useless arm that, splintered and bandaged, hung in its sling across his breast.

“It is quite impossible for me to attempt to swim it—like this,” he said, in unconscious soliloquy. “I could make no headway in such a flood, and should either be killed by one of those trees in the river, or hurried over the fatal falls. Neither alternative is pleasant to contemplate. There seems but one chance for my life—the slim chance that the water will rise no higher, and that I can keep my present position of safety until the tide falls again.”

How very hopeless was that last chance Delamere had no idea. Heavy rains in the mountains above, and east of that point, had swollen all the mountain rivulets into terrific proportions, and they were momentarily pouring their increased bulk into the river, and swelling its dangerous flood. He began to understand the fatality of his hope, as a great wave, with a huge branch of a tree on its crest, came splashing up and wetting his feet, while the branch, striking the boulder with a loud thud, reared dangerously upward for a moment as if it would hurl him from his desperate refuge, then, fortunately falling sideways, continued its interrupted course to the falls.

But what of Arthur Delamere's friend, and the gay party on the shore?

They had all scrambled up the bank in terror at the first appearance of danger, and were now in safety, watching the flood in the river below in the rapt fascination a great rising of water exerts over every one. Even the elderly Sir Harold Meredith had totally forgotten his missing friend in the all-absorbing interest of the moment.

Involuntarily Arthur Delamere's eyes lifted to the cliff where Diana Rainsforth still leaned on the swaying tree and watched the scene with eager, kindling dark eyes. In that same moment her quick glance, taking in every object at once, saw and comprehended like a flash of lightning the imminent peril of the young Englishman. He saw her lean forward impetuously, heard her voice ringing down to the people below, though her words were inaudible in the noise around him. The next instant she was swiftly, recklessly descending the bank, while a dozen pair of eyes turned toward

in horror, and the shrieks of frightened omen rose in concert above the waves.

"You will have to swim for your life, Arthur," shouted Sir Harold, running down the railway, and sending his voice ringing frantically over the water. "That is your only chance."

Diana Rainsforth's light feet had pattered all the way behind the speaker, and she stood still a moment watching Arthur Delamere as he slowly and painfully divested his arm of the sling, removed his coat and vest, and prepared to follow his friend's advice. His face was pale, and his lips set firmly, but there was no sign of fear in his brave bearing, and Diana watched him curiously, saw him making ready for that fatal plunge so calmly that her childish heart swelled with admiration. As he leaned forward for the desperate effort she hastily pulled the light veil from her hat, and waved it toward him.

"Don't dare to try it!" she screamed across the waves. "You will be swept over the falls! Stay where you are until help comes."

The ringing, girlish voice had the tone of command. Involuntarily Arthur Delamere obeyed it, stepping quickly back and waiting her will while the wild waters began to break over the rocks, splashing him from head to foot in their cold, blinding spray, and the last beam of sunset glimmered faintly, then faded out.

CHAPTER II.

The whole party had come up by that time, the women weeping in their handkerchiefs, the men wild-eyed and excited. It was awful to see a human being, a fellow-creature waiting for death in their very sight while they stood idle and powerless to help him.

Delamere watched the group with his grave, troubled eyes, and saw Diana talking earnestly to these men, arguing and pleading it seemed from her manner, while they sorrowfully shook their heads. Stalwart, brave men they were, too, but life was sweet to them, and they could not be tempted to risk it idly on so forlorn a hope. Now and then their words, spoken in high-pitched tones of excitement, echoed across to his strained hearing.

"Not a boat in three miles, Miss Diana," he heard in broken fragments of sentences that reached him. "If there were—could not live in such a current—remember the debris from the shores—the falls so near—utterly impossible!"

"But we have horses—lord the river!" echoed the girl's high-pitched soprano.

"Simple madness!" said another voice, and Diana turned off impatiently at that, and ran down to where the horses of the party were tethered some distance back on the narrow road winding ruggedly up the mountain. Presently she came tearing back, mounted on a beautiful black horse, strong, superb, and spirited from its flashing eyes, haughty head, and tossing black mane, to the slender hoof that seemed to spurn the ground. Her sister started forward in terror.

"Diana, you shall not. Ravenshoof cannot ford it."

"He can swim it, then!" said the girl, with a wild defiant laugh. "Get out of my way, Grace! Do you think I will stand still and see a human being perish in my sight?"

"Diana, you will be drowned! You shall not go. Listen to me, Diana. Oh, somebody stop her, please!" cried the beauty, turning her lovely, imploring eyes on the men around her as Diana impatiently urged her frightened and reluctant steed toward the bank.

Two men sprang forward and resolutely caught at her bridle-rein as she urged the trembling, snorting Ravenshoof forward, but they detained her but a moment, for Diana's little riding-whip, carried tightly in her clenched hand, was lifted quickly on Ravenshoof, making him plunge madly forward down the steep incline and into the surging water, followed by the chorus of shrieks and lamentations from the shore. Even the horse,

strong and brave as he was, recoiled with a whinny of terror as the cold waves rushed over his flanks; but, "Courage, my Ravenshoof," she whispered, fondly, and in a moment more he was struggling bravely forward, urged by the caressing tone of the mistress at whose least whisper he had dared many another threatening danger.

Into Arthur Delamere's soul a blind horror was creeping, as he watched the heroic girl, whom he had so pitilessly derided scarcely an hour ago.

"Get back!" he shouted, hoarsely, as he found his voice. "Go back, for Heaven's sake!" but she did not heed the wild expostulations he hurled towards her, nor the frenzied entreaties that followed from the shore, but still pressed forward in the fast-coming twilight that added its terrors to the dreadful scene.

Every nerve was strained to its utmost tension, and she made a picture of heroic bravery never to be forgotten by those who witnessed the sight.

Her long, dark hair, broken loose from confinement, flowed down her shoulder, wet and heavy with the river spray; her great black eyes shone out of her small, pale face like stars. Her little little form sat in the saddle erect as a statue, while she guided the plunging animal through the waves, that grew deeper and deeper, until they rushed up to her shoulders, closing for one awful, never-to-be-forgotten moment over Ravenshoof's head. The next moment, with a wild snort, the frightened animal reared upward, shook the water from his mane, and, urged by her voice and hand, began to swim for his life.

Breathlessly Delamere watched her from his dangerous exile; breathlessly the group on the shore noted her progress. Once there came an awful moment, when the women hid their faces and screamed, the men shuddered, and Delamere groaned in anguish. Three or four heavy boughs, drifting together down the river, headed directly toward her; but just before they reached her a seething whirlpool over a hidden rock changed the course of three. The fourth one reared straight upward an instant, and in falling, would have struck her horse's flank, but that Diana turned in her saddle, and with a dexterous movement of her hand turned the threatening branch aside, saving herself and Ravenshoof by that energetic movement.

A proud and ringing cheer went up from the men who watched her from the shore. They had been too prudent to risk almost certain death for an utter stranger, but they could see and acknowledge a heroism that shamed their cowardice, while it roused admiration to the highest pitch. But, undaunted by their praise or blame, Diana persevered until she reached the boulder.

She was not a minute too soon. Already it was submerged beneath the water, and great waves were breaking over it, threatening every instant to tear Delamere from the rough projection to which he clung with the desperation of despair. She checked her panting steed, and spoke quickly and coolly:

"Spring on the back of Ravenshoof, put your arms around me to steady yourself, and say a prayer for two souls in deadly peril, sir!"

He looked up, and in the wild waste of waters their glances met. A mocking light shone in her eyes, a jeering spirit, half eldsh, half childish, an odd, inexplicable smile curled the corners of her thin, red lips.

He shook his head in silence, and instantly a softer, gentler light flashed into her eyes.

"You are too proud to owe your safety to a girl, perhaps," she ventured, as she saw that he would not come.

"I am not coward enough to make your return an impossibility," he answered. "It would be the certain doom of both if I took you at your word. Your horse could not carry double."

She laughed lightly.

"Ravenshoof could carry three, if necessary. He is both strong and brave. Try him, sir. It is your one chance of life!" she urged, keep-

ing her seat with difficulty, as she held the plunging, frightened horse.

His one chance of life! The words touched a chord that sent a swift thought flying across the sea to a fond heart that would break if he should perish here. His face softened strangely and sweetly.

"He is thinking of his mother or his sweet-heart," thought the child-woman, noting that softened look, and she added, aloud: "If there is anybody that would grieve over your death, sir, you had better let my Ravenshoof save you."

"Thanks!" he answered, and, a moment later, had made the transit to Ravenshoof's back, and putting his arm round the waist of the brave little girl, sat erect and still while she headed for their return, and once more a great, triumphant, uproarious cheer arose from the watchers on the shore.

Diana's lip only curled in scorn at the demonstration, and Ravenshoof snorted in terror. He was almost maddened with fear already at the great black stumps rolling around him, and his slender ears were strained backward, and his large eyes glared glassily, as he breasted the raging flood with his double burden. But Diana's voice and touch soon soothed the terrified creature into comparative calmness, and swimming strongly and fiercely against the swift tide that tried its utmost to sweep them over the fatal falls, the shore was reached at last; and a dozen pairs of hands were waiting to lift the heroic girl from her saddle and lead her up the bank, where she shook herself free from them all, and ran to lay her face against Ravenshoof's neck, who, poor fellow! was shaking the water from his glossy black coat impatiently, but stood still and uttered a whinny of loving greeting, as the gentle hand of his mistress smoothed his thick black mane.

"Diana!" exclaimed her sister, approaching hastily; "you are as white as death—you are going to faint!"

Diana's dark eyes, that had suddenly closed, opened hastily again, and she tried to lift her left hand, that hung limp and helpless by her side.

"No," she answered; "I am not faint; but my hand pains me. It was sprained by the bough that struck me in the water. Will some one lead Ravenshoof away?" and they saw that her lip quivered a little, and her cheek grew a shade whiter.

"I owe you my life," said Delamere, approaching, in his dripping garments, and standing before her with bowed head, as before a queen. "It was a heroic deed!"

"It was nothing," she answered, turning from him coldly. "I am not afraid of anything."

"But you will suffer me to thank you?" he urged, following her, as she walked away as if she did not desire his company.

"You owe me no thanks," she answered; and Miss Rainsforth, listening curiously, heard her add, in a meaning tone, and with a bitter little laugh: "I was only paying a debt of honour. It was my revenge!"

CHAPTER III.

"Oh, dear, if I only had not sprained my wrist! I feel like a poor little bird in a cage!" exclaimed Diana, impatiently, as she paced up and down the long, terrace of her mountain home.

It was the morning after the great rise in the river, and Diana's sprained, aching wrist was godding her almost past endurance.

Young, spirited, full of bounding vitality, she had scarcely ever known an ache or pain, and it was very hard to be deprived of her liberty on this particular morning, when she was longing to spring on Ravenshoof's back and gallop down the mountain to view the river, which, rumour said, had risen steadily through the night, overflowing its banks in many places, and causing terrible devastation and ruin. But the feverish state of her wrist and arm had incurred the doctor's dictum of

confinement to the house, whereat Diana chafed and fretted like some wild caged creature.

Her sister Grace, sitting near, and looking extremely pretty in a light, blue morning dress, with a rose in her fair hair, looked up from her graceful embroidery at the impatient speaker.

"Serves you right!" said she, coolly. "A more foolish, unlady-like escapade I never beheld!"

Diana turned on her half angrily.

"Would you have had the man to drown?" said she.

"I had no objection—he was a total stranger," said Miss Rainsforth, indifferently. "Besides, he showed no more sanity in getting into the difficulty than you showed in getting him out of it."

"Which, being interpreted, means that we both were a pair of lunatics," commented Diana, as she stopped in her rapid walk, and looked out through the grove of trees that stood round about the house, like sentinels of the forest.

Without pausing for Grace's reply, she continued, abruptly:

"Well, here comes my partner in the loss of reason. You can air your opinions for his benefit as well as mine."

Miss Rainsforth started forward in a hurry, then went back to her graceful pose in the low easy chair. Her quick glance had shown her the two Englishmen riding up to the house under the guidance of a small urohin.

Her eyes turned to Diana, sweeping her comprehensively from head to foot.

"And you are a *fright*, as usual," said she.

"More frightful than usual," answered Diana, shedding back the dishevelled looks from her brow with one small, brown hand. "It isn't so easy to make a toilet with one's left hand in a sling! You might have helped me, Grace! I have helped you often enough."

"I had enough to do to dress myself," said the sister, carelessly, as she rose and glided forward to receive the two gentlemen, who had dismounted, and were approaching the house.

Her smile was dazzling, her voice full of sweet solicitude, as she inquired after Mr. Delamere's health.

"I hope your wetting in the river did not make you ill, sir?"

Mr. Delamere smiled down at the fair, girl-like face, and assured her that he had suffered no inconvenience from that source.

"And your poor arm?"

The blue eyes looked shyly up, as if deprecating her own gentle anxiety; their sweet solicitude deepening as he answered that his arm had sustained some injury, and the surgeon had found it necessary to reset it that morning.

He then hastened to present his friend, Sir Harold Meredith, to herself and Diana, who had been hanging back, with a somewhat cold and indifferent air. She rallied, however, at Grace's sidelook of displeasure, and, coming forward, allowed the visitors to shake the slim tips of her fingers, while she answered to their inquiries that she was as well as usual, and her wrist not so very painful.

Mr. Delamere turned to Grace then and preferred a somewhat surprising request.

"I should like a private interview with your father, Miss Rainsforth, if he is at home."

"With papa? Oh, certainly. William," said she, turning to an old man in faded livery, who was passing through the hall, "William take these gentlemen's cards to my father in the library, and condact them thither."

The "library" meant a large, airy room, with windows opening on the lawn. It was a parlour and sitting-room also, perhaps, for only one end of it was occupied by the bookcases and desks; the other end held a small cottage piano, a pretty Davenport, and was ornamented with pictures, vases of flowers, and a round table littered with fashion magazines, a little work-basket, and a few drawing materials. The visitors failed to take in these

details for some time, however, so completely did their host absorb their attention.

Mr Rainsforth was a tall, spare man, perhaps fifty years old, cleanly shaven, with blue eyes and grey hair. He was dressed in simple dark habiliments, with spotless linen, like a gentleman, and bore himself with a rather pompous air. He advanced to meet his visitors, flourishing their cards in one hand and cordially extending the other.

"Sir Harold Meredith, Mr. Arthur Delamere," said he with insinuating suavity, "I have the honour to welcome you to the poor abode of a reduced gentleman."

The visitors returned this somewhat pompous salutation rather stiffly, and accepted the chairs the attendant placed for them. After he had quietly withdrawn, and they had briefly discussed the event of the evening before, and warmly commended Diana's heroism, they entered upon an important business matter that had prompted their morning call.

Meanwhile Diana had gone back to her restless tramp up and down the length of the terrace, and Grace to her chair in a spasm of curiosity. There was a vast difference in the two young girls both by nature and education. Grace had been given the combined advantages and disadvantages of a modern boarding-school education. Diana had only picked up knowledge from her father's heterogeneous collection of books, with the airy daintiness and fickleness of the bee that flutters from flower to flower. She had absorbed some good, and perhaps some evil, in that desultory course of reading; but evil, when it touched her, was evanescent as the fleeting mists of her mountain home, and melted in the sunshine of her native purity. So their different rearing had only widened the palpable unlikeness of the blonde and the brunette. Grace was the apt pupil of coquetry, dissimulation, and art; Diana the frank and heedless child of nature.

"Diana, I do wonder what they can want of papa?" exclaimed Grace, moving her chair a little nearer in the line of Diana's weary march. "As sure as you live, Diana, that affair of yesterday is going to make your fortune. Yes, indeed, the old man means to adopt you for his heiress, or the young one means to settle a fortune on you."

Miss Rainsforth's eyes shone wide and blue with excitement. Her sister stopped, looked at her a moment, then laughed outright. She had a very musical laugh—all natural mirth sounds sweet—and the gay, incredulous chime rang out mockingly.

"Then he would be a fairy prince, would he not, Gracie?" said she; and the clear, high voice, and the winking diablerie of the laugh floated through the open window to the hearing of the gentlemen, provoking a pleased smile on the lip of Sir Harold Meredith, while his dignified friend actually glanced towards the window, as if the sound had a luring spell.

"Diana, if he does you must give me a new piano—you will, won't you? You were always generous, though you have so little to give. And some new jewellery—I dote on handsome jewels, but poor papa has so little to spend on me. And we can travel, and live in the great cities—I hate this dull, mountain home. Oh, you will be able to do so much for poor papa and me! And it will be such a pleasure to you—won't it, dear?"

Grace had risen, and was walking up and down by Diana's side, with her arm about her neck. She knew as no one else did the keynote to Diana's nature, though she never touched it save for some wheedling, selfish purpose. The wild nature that harshness and injustice could never tame melted into sweetness at the touch of love. She turned around, with a great dew of tenderness in her large black eyes, and clasped her arms about the fair dissembler's neck.

"Gracie," said she, "you know I would give you anything I have—though it is little enough, Heaven knows—when you are good to me. I would not accept anything from these gentlemen if they were kind enough to offer it to me—not a penny for myself. But if they forced

it upon papa—and you know that *might* be easy enough with *him*—you might have it all freely, you and papa."

Grace turned round and kissed the smooth olive cheek so near her own—a Judas kiss, whose duplicity Diana's innocent soul could not fathom.

"You dear, generous little soul!" said she to Diana.

So they walked up and down, talking very amiably together, Grace building some very fine *chateaux en Espagne* out of very uncertain material, until Diana took a fancy to go down and look at the gentlemen's horses, and Grace returned to her embroidery.

But in a moment a joyous laugh floated back to her, and she glanced up. Her sister was sitting in Mr. Delamere's saddle. She leaned over, possessed herself of the bonnet of the waiting-boy, and set it jauntily back on her head.

"These are very fine horses!" she cried. "I mean to try the mettle of the bay one. Only a half-mile, Grace, and back again in a minute. It cannot hurt my wrist;" and she was off like the wind, a wilful disobedient elf.

The gentlemen were waiting for her when she rode back. Mr. Delamere's tall head bent over Grace, as she aired the gushing coquetties of a fresh boarding-school miss for his delectation. Sir Harold stood by his horse, talking to Mr. Rainsforth, and Diana was surprised to see her father draw his handkerchief over his eyes as if deeply affected.

"This has been too much for me," she heard him say, in a subdued voice. "The revival of old memories, the suddenness of the change, unnerves me; but I will duly prepare the dear child for the separation, and to-morrow I will present you to the heiress."

"Grace was right. Sir Harold means to adopt me," thought Diana, in such a plight that she forgot to apologize for taking the horse—forgot to wish the gentlemen good morning, even—but ran away up stairs to her own room, buried her hot face in the pillows, and would not even look up at Grace when she followed her.

"Papa, would not tell me a word, Grace," said she, poutingly; "but he is in great excitement over something, and says he will tell us this evening the business on which the gentlemen called."

That day was a long one to both the girls. Long to Grace by reason of her consuming anxiety, and to Diana because of her painful wrist, and the irksome confinement indoors, coupled with a little nervous dread of what was coming. It wanted to a close at last, however, and after tea Mr. Rainsforth summoned his expectant daughters to the library, closed the door, and with a mysterious air began the promised revelation.

(To be continued.)

A LADY'S COMPLEXION.—Since the unhappy possessor of a muddy complexion cannot hope to be considered beautiful, she will try any means of improving it. Oatmeal is an excellent softener of the skin. After a warm bath it may be used dry, or pour boiling water over a few teaspoonfuls of it, and let it stand a few hours. On going to bed, wash the hands and face freely in the starchy water, and dry without wiping. Bran and Indian meal may be used instead, with nearly the same effect. For the full bath put the bran or oatmeal into small bags, otherwise the difficulty of removing the particles which adhere to the skin is considerable. Instead of the poultices of bread and asses' milk which the Roman ladies found so efficacious for softening and whitening the face, we may use a mask of quilted cotton or chamois skin, wet in cold distilled water. This will not be the most comfortable in the world, but no great excellence is ever attained without labour and care. Many ladies, whose complexions are the envy of all their friends, acknowledge that they owe it to distilled water, which they used for their face and hands.

IN SPIKE OF HERSELF.

Two of Mrs. Mortimer's excellent guests, gentlemen, were lolling in the smoking-room this lovely summer's morning, puffing lazily at their cigars as they endeavoured to while away the time between breakfast and dinner in conversation and smoke.

One of them, who had just languidly informed his companion that his very marked attention to Isabel Whyte, his hostess's pretty but impetuous niece, was naught but "a little flirtation," was a tall, handsome man of about thirty years of age, with that unmistakable air of distinction which travel and good breeding stamp indelibly upon the face and bearing of those whom fickle fortune favours with her smiles. Leonard Ashley was a thorough man of the world.

The room in which the two men sat smoking opened through wide French windows on to the lawn, but on account of the heat of the morning sun the venetian blinds were drawn and the view of the garden shut off.

"Well, well, old boy, amuse yourself, if you are not in any deeper than a bit of a flirtation," said Tom Mayne, after his friend's drawing reply to a little attempted advice. "But I tell you, old fellow, it looks extremely like an old-fashioned courtship to outsiders, and the aunt has got her eye on it, and appears exceedingly well satisfied with the turn affairs are apparently taking. There will be quite a 'cut up' in that quarter when you throw her over, and you had better take my advice and do it easy; commence now and cool off by stages, for you can't carry it much further without coming to some understanding. Oh, by the way, is the girl flirting too? Quite a bright little thing, she. Pity there's not a penny in the family; that's the only drawback to her making a man a very clever little wife; but of course as it is, it's quite out of the question."

"Quite," drawled Ashley, lighting a fresh cigar. "Let us go down to the river and have a paddle before dinner," and the subject of Isabel Whyte was blown away in smoke, as he lazily rose from his chair and walked to the window leading to the lawn.

As Ashley drew up the blinds and stepped out on to the terrace, a white muslin dress rustled round the corner of the building out of sight.

"Will Mr. Ashley join us at tennis this afternoon?"

It was Isabel who spoke, looking up brightly into the face of Leonard Ashley, who sat next her at luncheon.

Pretty little Isabel, whose penniless virtues as a rich man's wife had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, was gazing into the eyes of the man who was playing with her heart, with her innocent, trusting, captivated soul looking out through hers.

"With all my heart, Miss Whyte, if I may play as your partner."

She blushed her assent, with her blue eyes fixed on her plate.

The game that afternoon must have proved remarkably pleasant to Isabel, whose flushed and eager face beamed with enjoyment and satisfaction as she accompanied Leonard across the lawn after having been ignominiously defeated in five games.

Victory did not seem to be necessary to complete their happiness, however, for even Ashley showed an unusual earnestness as he walked by the side of Isabel with the racquets slung over his shoulder, and his tall form bent slightly, as he talked in low tones to the girl.

His languid expression had given way to a bright look of pleasure, and his handsome eyes snapped in a way that was in sharp contrast with his usual languor.

"Remember, Isabel," he whispered, as he parted with her at the house, "I am to have all the dances this evening!"

"Yes, all."

With a tell-tale blush she sped up the stairs.

Leonard walked thoughtfully off to his apartment, a mixture of strange feelings creating a turmoil in his heart.

When he reached his room, before changing his toilet for the evening, he threw off his coat and hastily seating himself at a writing-table began hurriedly a letter. He never ceased until the task, which was a long one, was completed, except now and then to pause for a moment to find some suitable expression, for the wording of the epistle appeared to need considerable care.

He finished at last, and carefully folding it placed it in an envelope, which he superscribed in his best hand:

"Wilfred Ashton, Esq., the Pines, Devon."

"There, uncle mine, this will be a little surprise for you at dinner to-morrow."

With these words he laid the letter upon the table and began with unusual care to arrange his evening dress.

"Come, Isabel, out here the moonlight is beautiful, and the air sweet with the June flowers. We have ample time to enjoy a walk among the shrubbery before the next dance. The breeze will cool you; your face is flushed and heated. Besides," he whispered, bending tenderly over her, "I have something to tell you which can be better said under the stars and in the silvery moonlight. Come."

A strange gleam came into Isabel's eyes which Leonard did not see, and the thin lips were set in a straight line; but without a word she slipped her arm through his, and they moved out together into the glorious night.

For some moments they walked on among the trees and plants of the excellently kept park, without either speaking. He seemed nervous and ill at ease, apparently seeking for words to express his thoughts. She was waiting.

"Isabel," he said, finally, suddenly finding his voice as they reached a rustic bench at a remote part of the garden. "Isabel, sit here a moment, the moon is bright here, and I want you to read a letter I have written this afternoon. Will you?"

"Certainly, Mr. Ashley, if you desire me to."

She spoke as though she felt no interest in this letter or its contents, and the tone was so different from her usual childish, affectionate style, that Leonard looked quickly at her. She was not looking at him, but straight ahead into the bushes at the other side of the path, and an expression of mingled pain and triumph, alike unusual to her, filled her eyes.

He did not see this, and taking the envelope from his pocket, which he had directed to his uncle that afternoon and left unsealed, he took the letter from it and handed it to her.

"Read it."

As he spoke all trace of his customary languid, careless manner left him, and his eyes sparkled with inward excitement as he eagerly watched her unfold and read the letter.

In an undertone, half aloud and half to herself, she read without once changing her set expression:—

"DEAR UNCLE,—I have changed my plans somewhat since I last talked with you, when you desired and I acquiesced, that I should pay my court to the daughter of your old friend. As I say, since then my plans are altered, and feeling that you are now my nearest living relative, it is right you should know of my intentions. The amount of it all is I have given my heart into the keeping of Miss Isabel Whyte, who has yielded to my love, and consented to become the wife of your affectionate nephew,"

"P.S.—Let me hear from you."

As Isabel finished Leonard dropped on his knee, and taking her hands, cried, quickly,—

"Isabel, darling! may I send it? Will you give me the right? Say you will, dear. See, I am waiting. You love me, you do love me! I have seen it in your eyes and in your words. Speak, Isabel; do not look so cold and calm!"

She turned her eyes upon him, still with

that strange expression, and, with a half smile, said,—

"Would not that be carrying the joke a trifle too far, Mr. Ashley?"

"Joke?" gasped Ashley. "What do you mean, Isabel? You cannot think I am speaking in jest!"

"I mean, Mr. Ashley, that the old gentleman, your uncle, would probably echo the sentiments of your friend, Mr. Mayne, and yourself, that I might make a man a very clever little wife, only that there is not a penny in the family; and, of course, as it is, it is quite out of the question, quite! And not having any personal ill-feeling against your uncle, I must decline to make him the subject of so practical a joke, and possibly put him thoroughly out of humour with his excellent nephew, all on account of 'a little flirtation'!"

As she finished speaking she rose to her feet, her lips set, and her eyes flashing with indignation.

Ashley said not a word. He felt the sting of his own words, and was silent. The conversation which had occurred in the morning when he was yet struggling with the love which this girl had planted in his heart even during what with him was but a flirtation, but with her a happy reality until his cruel words had undeceived her, came quickly before him, and he knew that he had lost her; and oh! how doubly precious she seemed now that all hope of winning her had fled! He could not unsay those careless words which had so hopelessly wounded her sensitive soul, though he scarcely believed in the truth of them at the time. He knew even if she had loved him that love was dead, or her womanly pride would henceforth smother it within her. He had no word to say, and bowed his head as she swept by him with a quiet nod.

She did not re-enter the drawing-room, but went at once to her own apartment, where as soon as she had closed and looked the door, she threw herself upon the bed, and the agony of her heart found a vent in tears.

"Oh, how I loved him!" she sobbed, aloud. "How I loved him!" and then with a new burst of tears she wailed: "And now, even now, I love him, but I cannot forgive those cruel words."

"Really, Mr. Ashley, this is very sudden. Cannot your business be put off for a week or more? or, better still, cannot Mr. Mortimer, who goes up to town to-day, attend to it for you?" inquired the fair hostess, at the breakfast-table, when Leonard had made known his intention of leaving that morning.

"Thanks, Mrs. Mortimer, but unhappily the nature of my business requires my personal attendance. I am extremely sorry to have to shorten my stay, which you have rendered so enjoyable that it is a pain to have to leave."

"Well, at least you will lunch with us on the cliffs as proposed, and I will have you driven direct from there to the station in time for the afternoon train."

"I shall be only too happy to enjoy the few extra hours in your society," answered Leonard, politely bowing to Mrs. Mortimer, and casting a covert glance at Isabel, who still retained her place beside him, having no reasonable excuse for changing it.

As he left the table he paused behind her chair a moment, and then with a sudden movement as though having nerved himself to speak, he bent over her.

"Miss Whyte," he said, "will you go?"

"Not this morning," she answered, coldly. "I have a headache! I may join them after lunch, when the sun is not so hot."

She was avoiding him. He felt a sharp pain in his heart, but still persisting, he continued:

"In a week I shall be on the ocean, Miss Whyte; will you grant me one favour before I go. For the sake of my—friendship if nothing else?"

She did not answer, but bowed her head assentingly.

"Go this morning to the cliffs."

Once more she nodded without a word, and he was forced to leave her thus. She felt that for all, he loved her now, and he was going away for that love. She knew she loved him—loved him with all her strong, womanly heart; but her pride had been wounded, and through that very love, and now she could not own it, though she felt he was suffering deeply for the wound he had inflicted. What could he want? Was he going to renew his attentions at the cliffs? She almost wished he would, for she felt her love could not hold out again against his pleading. No, he felt his position too keenly for his pride to allow him to recur to the subject again. Pride was widening the breach between two hearts which a flirtation had commenced.

The cliff was a picturesque spot, and no more charming place could be selected for a picnic or outdoor lunch. It overlooked the river about fifty feet above the level of the water, and shady trees grew almost on the verge.

Isabel was looking thoughtfully over into the river, seated on a low flat stone, when Leonard joined her.

"Miss Whyte!"

She looked up quickly; her face was pale and intensely sad, but she never started or changed colour as her eyes met his. She had been thinking of him; he had been filling her thoughts. Why should his appearance startle her?

"Miss Whyte," he continued, "I asked you to come here to-day that I might say a few words to you before I went away that I could not in justice to myself leave unsaid. I will not detain you long, nor will I repeat anything which may pain you. First, for the words which you must have overheard between myself and Mayne, I sincerely ask your pardon. I will not attempt to excuse them except to tell you that even love of you was unknowingly filling my heart. I know that since then you intentionally led me on that you might all the more surely strike your blow. I have no word of fault to find. I bow to your indignation, but for all that is past, I love you now, deeply, devotedly, with all my heart. My own words are my own shame. I could not go away without telling you this. Now, farewell."

He held out his hand as he spoke; his face was pale and set.

She took his hand mechanically, without meeting his eyes or speaking a word. He stood a moment, then, with a sigh, turned away and was gone.

For some time Isabel did not move, but remained sitting where she was, with her eyes looking unseeingly out over the river; then, with a little moan, she sank on the grass and buried her face in her hands.

"Oh, Leonard! Leonard!" she sobbed, "come back to me!"

But Leonard Ashley was long since out of hearing, and once more her pride had ruled her heart.

But he was not destined to leave her so.

When Isabel had dried her eyes, and quieted her beating heart sufficiently to meet the rest of her party again, Ashley had driven away to the station behind Mrs. Mortimer's lovely pair of greys. The remainder of the afternoon passed like a dream to Isabel; heart and brain were both numbed with a dull, aching pain, until, as the merry party were driving homeward, when the sun was slowly disappearing amid crimson clouds in the west, a man on horseback, driving like mad, met them. Even the sight of this rider tearing along towards them, which immediately interested the balance of the party, did not arouse the girl from her lethargy until he wheeled up alongside the carriage, and gasping for breath, which he had ridden out, cried to Mrs. Mortimer:

"An accident, marm! The greys bolted—Mr. Ashley at the house dead!"

At the mention of Leonard's name Isabel came out of her stupor, sat upright in the carriage, her pale face now actually livid; then came a heart-rending shriek, and she fainted.

But bad news is always easily exaggerated, and when the pleasure party arrived home, they did not find Leonard Ashley dead, although he had had a narrow escape, and lay bleeding and insensible in the drawing-room. The horses had become frightened and unmanageable at the sight of the railway, and running had thrown Markham out against a post on the side of the road, and cutting an ugly gash in the back of his head, and rendering him, with his black, blood-matted hair and ghastly face, decidedly corpse-like in appearance; but on the arrival of the doctor they removed him to the apartment he had occupied, and made him as comfortable as human skill could, though he breathed very heavily, and consciousness did not return.

The doctor would say nothing decisive when he had done everything in his power for the time, and was about to go, except shake his head gravely; but poor, pale Isabel, who had recovered her consciousness before they had reached the house, and had been foremost among them all with a helping hand, was not satisfied, and followed him down stairs to the door, and lifting her pleading, tearful eyes to his, faintly asked for the verdict.

"Well, little one," he said, looking at her pityingly, "I won't say there is no hope, but only constant watching and the best of care will bring him through."

Nothing more, but she thanked him for that.

For three days and nights she never left his bed for a moment while he lay unconscious. She had forgotten her pride now. His life depended upon her watchfulness and care, for who else could give him that unceasing devotion? The bitter words he had spoken were forgotten. When he returned to life, if he ever did, she would creep away unobserved, and he would never know that her unceasing care had brought him back.

On the fourth day he began to show signs of returning consciousness, and calling softly to the nurse, who was sleeping in the next apartment, she looked at him for a moment, her eyes filled with soft love-light—for now in his helplessness could she not love him as she would if he were dead?—and moved lightly from the room.

From that moment he grew steadily better; the crisis was passed. Isabel had saved his life. She did not again enter the room, but each day met the doctor outside the door, and heard his reassuring report.

At last, one morning, as she was waiting outside his door, the doctor came out smiling, but did not close the door behind him as usual. Raising Isabel, he cried, heartily:

"He, here's the little nurse that brought my patient back to life. I've been telling Mr. Ashley about you for the first time this morning, and he is anxious to thank you; and seeing you saved his life, I think it's quite proper in him. Come, he is much better this morning, and it will do him good to see someone."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Isabel, turning pale, and pushing the kind-hearted doctor away, who was trying to draw her into the room.

"Come along, come along," he persisted, misunderstanding her objection. "I tell you it will do him no harm, on my word," and he laughed one of his hearty, ringing laughs, and, despite her struggling resistance, dragged her into the room.

The chamber was darkened, and at first she could distinguish nothing, as the doctor pushed her, with good-natured force, into the middle of the room, and went out and shut the door; but for Leonard, who was leaning on his arm eagerly watching, the light was sufficient.

"Isabel!" he cried to the girl, who stood still in the middle of the room, with her head bowed, where the doctor had left her, "Isabel, have you brought me back to life or death?"

There was a piteous, pleading tone in his weak voice, and he tried to hold his hands out to her. She slowly raised her eyes to his; hers were full of tears—all the pride was gone.

"Isabel, come!"

With a little gasping cry she moved toward the bed and sank on her knees.

"Forgive me!" she sobbed, "I tried to call you back, but it was too late—too late!"

He gently drew her head towards him and tenderly kissed her forehead.

"Let us both forgive," he said, presently, and then he put both his arms around her neck, and rested her head on his breast.

For a long time they remained so, and then he said, softly putting his hand under his pillow:

"Here, Isabel, is a letter I have kept because it tells of my love for you. You have read it before. Will you post it for me?"

It was only a little half-frightened whisper that answered:

"Yes, dear!"

But it was enough to cheer the heart of Leonard Ashley.

E. C. R.

FACETIÆ.

A NEGRO baby was born in the States, recently, which weighed only one pound and a quarter, and a "literary feller," hearing of the circumstance, remarked that it was funny how anything so dark could be so light.

"If I ever marry, I shan't seek for mind; mind is too cold. I'll choose an emotional woman." "Don't do it," eagerly exclaimed his bald-headed friend, "don't do it, I implore you. My wife is an emotional woman."

AT THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.—A large man leans over towards the pit where the bears are confined. He loses his footing and falls in. Naturally, he utters heart-rending cries. The guardian rushes up, and, in a voice full of reproach, says: "Monsieur, it is forbidden to throw anything to the bears!"

COUNTRY DOCTOR (to Tomkins): "Now, with regard to that cat on the top of your head, I don't think it will be serious, but you must keep your eye upon it." And Tomkins, who had just the slightest suspicion of a squint, goes away and disrecommends that doctor.

SAID V—, smarting under the hands of the barber, "I wish you were where your razor is." "Where is that, sir?" asked the tonsorial artist. "Under ground," replied V—, with a snap.

AN EARLY LESSON IN ART.—While visiting the Louvre in Paris, a lady showed the Venus of Milo to her little daughter. "But tell me, mamma," asked the child, "what did they cut her arms off for?" "Because she was always snooking her thumb." Her daughter asked no more questions.

A GENTLEMAN, at an eating-house, asked the person next to him if he would please to pass the musard. "Sir," said the man, "do you mistake me for the waiter?" "Oh, no, sir," was the reply; "I mistook you for a gentleman."

YOUNG LADY (just from boarding-school, at dinner-table): "Please, papa, I'd like a leg of the roast chicken." Papa: "You have had one, my dear, and your brother had the other." Young lady (in sprightly manner): "Oh, sure enough! A chicken has only two legs. It's a duck that has four."

JUDGE BLACK had one of those "ears for music" that cannot tell one tune from another. Once he heard his daughter Becky, who is a fine pianist, play a piece that pleased him, and inquired its title. She replied that it was "Lucy Neal," and the judge ever after declared it to be his favourite. Whenever Becky would be playing for visitors, the judge would say, "Now, Becky, give us my favourite, 'Lucy Neal.'" And Becky, slyly winking at the guests, would play "Old Dan Tucker" or "Old Hundred." As she concluded, the judge would tip back in his chair and exclaim, "That's my favourite!" and would wonder what the people were laughing at.

SOCIETY.

THE Empress Eugénie arrived at Portsmouth on the 25th January, and was met by the Princess Beatrice, who had crossed from Osborne in the royal yacht *Alberta*. The naval and military authorities were in attendance to receive the Empress, who was to stay at Osborne Cottage during the visit to her Majesty.

THE Duke of Connaught has been pleased to describe his recent visit to Lucknow as one of the pleasantest of his experiences in the East. For the two days of their sojourn at the capital of Oudh the Duke and Duchess occupied a large house in Dilkusha, placed at their disposal by Lieut.-General Charles Curzon, C.B., who is in command of the Oudh division. During this time their Royal Highnesses availed themselves of the opportunity of inspecting such localities of interest as the old Bailey Guard-house, the audience hall which was used as a general hospital during the mutiny, the room in which Sir Henry Lawrence received his mortal wound on the 2nd of July, 1857, the *tykhana* where the women and children of the 32nd regiment took refuge, and the Great Imambara, or mausoleum of Asaph-Dowlah, considered by the late Lord Valentia the finest building he had seen in India.

THE marriage of Miss Alice C. Hervey Bathurst, youngest daughter of the late Sir Frederick H. Hervey Bathurst, Bart., of Clarendon, and Mr. Charles Clement Tudway, of the Cedars, Wells, was solemnized on the 15th Jan. at the parish church of Alderbury. She wore white satin, with tulle veil and orange wreath, the dress being draped with sprays of orange blossoms. The dresses of the bridesmaids were of dark and light shaded maroon velvet, trimmed with lace, and they wore mob hats.

THE marriage of Prince Louis of Battenberg with the Queen's grand-daughter has been definitely fixed for April 15. The ceremony will take place at Darmstadt, and will be attended by her Majesty, the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duchess of Edinburgh, the Duke and Duchess of Albany, and Princess Beatrice. In all probability the Crown Prince and Princess of Germany will also be there.

A MARRIAGE is arranged between the Hon. Victoria Baillie, maid of honour to the Queen, and Captain Grant, cousin to the fiancée.

LADY HERMONA DUNCOMB, the youthful bride of the Marquis of Kildare, looked particularly lovely in her bridal dress, which was of cream velours epingle made with very long train, the petticoat being of satin, elegantly trimmed with exquisite point lace (the Duchess of Leinster's gift). The small wreath of orange blossoms was covered with a spotted tulle veil. We remarked that the bride wore no gloves. The twelve bridesmaids, two of whom arrived when the ceremony was nearly over, wore costumes entirely of white Sicilienne and uncut velvet, bordered with marabout, and large bonnets with aigrettes. The bridegroom dispensed with the services of a "best man." The Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne, accompanied by Lady Alexandra Leveson Gower, arrived shortly before the bride. Her Royal Highness looked remarkably well in bright ruby satin and velvet, with bonnet *en suite*. Her present to the bride was a marqueterie bureau, and to the bridegroom she gave an Argyllshire marble inlaid table and a gold pen and pencil case.

A MARRIAGE is announced between Mlle. Aline Rothschild and the Duc de Morny-Richard Durnford, Esq., eldest son of the Bishop of Chichester, will shortly lead to the hymeneal altar Beatrice, youngest daughter of the late Pridcaux Selling, Esq.

THE Countess of Clarendon has so far recovered from the effects of her bad hunting fall, when she broke her leg, as to be settled in London. Her ladyship is now able to be taken out every day in an invalid carriage.

STATISTICS.

THE system of irrigation now in use in the Madras Presidency is on a vast scale. In all it includes nearly 53,000 tanks, requiring embankments which would extend a distance of 30,000 miles, while the total number of masonry works are at least 300,000. It is remarkable that this whole gigantic scheme is of native origin, not one new tank having been made by Europeans.

THE EVENING OPENING OF MUSEUMS.—The attendance in the evenings (i.e., from 6 to 10 on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Saturdays in each week—twelve hours) at the South Kensington Museum in 1883 was 224,514, as against 201,421 in 1882. The attendance in the day time (i.e., from 10 to 4, 5, or 6 p.m. on six days per week—thirty-six to forty-eight hours) on free days was 741,785, and on students' days (when a charge of 6d. for admission is made) 127,511, making a total for 1883 of 1,093,810, and a total since the opening of the museum of 22,675,912. (At the Bethnal Green Museum, out of a total of 447,762 visitors in 1883, 207,914 went between the hours of 6 and 10 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Saturdays (twelve hours) in each week, and 239,838 between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4, 5, or 6 p.m. (thirty-six to forty-eight hours) on six days per week.)

GEMS.

THE same refinement that brings us new pleasures exposes us to new pains.

THE virtue of prosperity is temperance; the virtue of adversity is fortitude.

WE pass often from love to ambition, but we seldom return from ambition to love.

AS daylight can be seen through very small holes, so little things will illustrate a person's character.

YOU may gain knowledge by reading, but you must separate the wheat from the chaff by thinking.

A MAN's virtue should be measured, not by his occasional exertions, but by the doings of his ordinary life.

FAME, as a river, is narrowest where it is bred, and broadest afar off; so exemplary writers depend not upon the gratitude of the world.

FAME confers a rank above that of a gentleman and of kings. As soon as she issues her patent of nobility, it matters not a straw whether the recipient be the son of a Bourbon or of a tallow-chandler.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

APPLE-CHARLOTTE FOR CHILDREN.—Butter a small pie-dish or round basin; line it with thin slices of bread and butter—the staler the bread the better; cut some large cooking-apples into thin quarters or slices and lay them on the bread-and-butter, with a sprinkling of brown sugar and pounded lemon-peel. Proceed thus in alternate layers till the dish is full. Bake in a quick oven till the apples are quite soft, and the bread-and-butter is quite crisp; this can be either turned out, or served up in the pie-dish, as preferred.

STEWED LYONNAISE POTATOES.—Put a pint of milk in a frying-pan; add a piece of butter the size of a walnut, some salt and pepper; let it boil. Take a heaping teaspoonful of corn-flour, mix it with a little cold milk, and add it to the milk in the pan. Keep stirring while adding it. Have ready six or seven good-sized potatoes, peeled and cut into small slices. Put them into the pan with a little parsley and one chopped onion. Cover them with a plate, and let them stew gradually for fifteen minutes. Send to table in a covered dish.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE MISTLETOE.—This singular parasite is generally found on branches of apple trees, but is not very particular in this respect, and takes its habitation also on different other trees. It may be raised from seed placed in the crevices of the bark of young, healthy branches, or it may be propagated by grafting; in which case a portion of the bark of the tree from which it is taken has to be cut with the piece, and firmly secured to the new position.

ONE of the recent proposals for the advancement of civilization is a new regulation duelling sword, with which character of weapon all duels shall henceforth be fought. The sword often thoroughly disconcerts a duellist if it is more pliable, heavier, or lighter than the one he has been accustomed to exercise with at his fencing *salon*, and which is there considered the correct weapon.

A TABLE SCARF.—A novel and pretty way to trim a table scarf is to put three-cornered pieces of silk or satin on each end. Have these pieces half a yard deep at the longest side, in the corner embroider a spray of flowers; where the satin or silk edge joins the centre part of the scarf, put a row of fancy stitches. A dark crimson felt scarf with one end light blue, the other of crimson shaded to brown is very handsome.

WHO DISCOVERED AMERICA.—Among the archives of the noble house of Este, at Modena, a very curious and important plainsphere, dating from the year 1502, has just been discovered. It was, it appears from a manuscript accompanying it, given to Hercoleo d'Este by Cattino, his political agent at Lisbon, and on it are traced the outlines of all the New World countries which were discovered by Gaspard Cortereal toward the close of the fifteenth century. Geographers will recognize in this part of the plainsphere the prototype of that map of the New world which until the sixteenth century was usually bound up with Ptolemy's works; but the valuable relic is mainly remarkable because it apparently proves that the coast of the peninsular of Florida, as well as the eastern portion of what is now the United States, must have been visited by voyagers whose names and nationalities we know nothing of, some time before the discovery of Central America. It, in fact, reopens a question which has never been satisfactorily settled, and affords a powerful argument in favour of those writers who maintain, in face of the claims of Vesputio, Colon, and the adventurers of the time of Elizabeth and James I., that the Old World shook hands with the New long ere any of those celebrated navigators were born or even thought of.

A NEW INDUSTRY.—When Napoleon called the British a nation of shopkeepers—which, by the way, was only a repetition of what Louis XIV. had said of the Dutch—he little dreamed that three-quarters of a century after the paramount consideration in France would be money, got honestly if possible, but money. The intense craving for it which essayists with an imperfect knowledge of the French character choose to call frugality and providence, has its comic sides also, especially when it leads to mystification and often to disappointment. A case in point occurred the other day. At the corner of the Parvis Notre Dame and the new flower market in Paris, a crowd had collected to watch a couple of divers plunging into the Seine and reappearing after twenty minutes or so, with baskets full of deposit, which they emptied into a barge close by. The mystery was this: In the course of a dredging expedition undertaken some time since by the government, a quantity of gold and silver coins were found at the bottom of the river. The hope of finding still more had induced M. Vincent to equip a diving apparatus. He pays a certain tax to the authorities, and has begun operations near the smaller bridge, on the site of the only sewer that Paris possessed in the year 1347.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- C. B. W.—Hair enclosed dark brown.
- W. R., M. S., and J. B.—Fair writing.
- SARA.—Three months' notice is required in the case named.
- JANE.—The name of Abraham (Hebrew) signifies the father of many.
- L. B.—The name of the firm you solicit information about is not in the directory.
- R. R.—The name Horace means "worthy to be believed." Very good writing.
- MARY BROWN.—You can sue on the agreement, but must pay the penalty for its not being stamped before it can be produced in evidence.
- G. M.—Take the will to a respectable solicitor—it seems a very curious and vague document. A compromise would perhaps be the best course.
- S. E. C.—No; but there are dispensaries in which medicines are dispensed to the poor, and medical advice given gratis.
- S. S.—Grease spots may be removed from wall paper by putting clean blotting paper over them and pressing it with a hot flat iron.
- D. F.—Swanadown is a fine, soft, thick cloth of wool mixed with silk or cotton. Also the fine, soft feathers of the swan, used for various articles of dress.
- M. C.—Frosted beer is best recovered by the addition of a few hops boiled in a little sweet wort; or by adding a little molasses to induce a fresh fermentation.
- K. D.—Rowena is the name of an Anglo-Saxon princess in Sir Walter Scott's novel of *Kenilworth*; and Paulina is the wife of Antigonus, in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*.

- R. J. C.—1st. We know of none that we can recommend. 2nd. Your handwriting for a boy of sixteen is very good. Practice daily and you will soon make a fine penman.
- W. G. R.—The cold weather has brought muffs again into requisition. Some are of the daintiest description, being in the form of flowers and birds. One, shaped like a lily, is made of white satin and duchesse lace, and lined with rose-pink swan-down. Another, in the form of a sea-gull, is made of brown mottled velvet, showing spots of white and gold. The wings are lined with gold-coloured satin, and a bow of ribbon of the same shade represents the tail. A genuine trown-gull's head is added, and the effect is very pretty.
- R. T. V.—To cure chapped hands, wash them with castile soap, and before removing it, scrub the hands with a tablespoonful of Indian meal, rinsing thoroughly with soft, tepid water, using a little of the meal, each time except the last. Wipe them perfectly dry, and rinse again in a very little water containing a teaspoonful of pure glycerine, rubbing the hands together until the water has evaporated. The purest glycerine should be used, as otherwise it will irritate the hands instead of healing them.

- N. B. M.—The large and inconvenient size of billiard tables has led to the introduction of bagatelle tables—bagatelle being the French word for anything trifling. A bagatelle-table is usually about seven feet long and twenty-one inches broad; it is lined with cloth and a game is performed on it with balls and a cue or mace. The balls are small ivory spheres, and the sport consists in striking one or more into holes at one end of the board. To perform this and other feats, some skill and experience are required. Bagatelle-tables may be purchased at a small expense.

- SORROWFUL JANE.—1. Tell your husband of your troubles, giving him a full history of the unpleasant ways and actions of your mother-in-law, and ask him to use his influence in putting a stop to the annoyance. He has sworn to protect you, and your comfort should be paramount to anything else in the world. If you are a true wife to him, and perform all the duties allotted you in this life, he should see that you are not subjected to such annoyance as described, even though the author of it is his own mother. 2. Writing and spelling are both up to the general average.

- B. D.—1. It would be advisable to let your eyebrows retain their natural colour, and not attempt to improve them by artificial means. 2. Among the host of perfumes now made may be mentioned white violet, mignonette, patchouli, new-mown hay, and heliotrope, any one of which will be likely to suit you. 3. To improve your handwriting, which at present is cramped, it will be necessary to practise considerably. 4. Light brown hair. 5. The mother may have her initials engraved in the ring presented to her daughter, or the words "Let love increase" inserted in their place. The former is the usual way, some persons adding the date of the presentation.

- G. K. D.—1. The hen canary will sometimes eat her own eggs. To prevent this, put her food in the cage over night, for after laying her eggs in the morning she usually looks for her breakfast, and if it is not found, she may break every egg in the nest. If, however, she does this when food is within reach, she is not worth much. 2. The best food for the little one is hard-boiled egg, mixed with a small quantity of wheat bread. Cut up the egg fine, and add to it the bread, which has been previously soaked in water and squeezed dry. Be sure to always have it fresh, as otherwise there is great

danger of killing the young ones. 3. The birds may be mated during the months of February, March, or April, and not as late as June, the hen usually beginning to lay in April. 4. The canary lays from four to six eggs, and hatches five, and sometimes six times in a season.

P. W. F.—The crown of England contains one large ruby, seventeen sapphires—one very large—eleven emeralds, four rubies, 1,363 brilliants (diamonds), 1,373 rose-diamonds, 147 table diamonds, and 277 pearls, four of them drop-shaped.

D. R.—The mocking bird is so called because it can imitate with fidelity not only the notes of other birds but the cries of animals. It has been known to imitate inanimate things, such as the creaking of a passing wheelbarrow, and the sound made by sharpening a knife on a grindstone. Its imprisonment in a cage does not seem to impair its energy or power.

C. D.—The eagle is denominated the "king of birds" on account of its superior size, strength, and courage. The most noted species are the golden eagle; the imperial eagle of Europe; the bald eagle of America; and the great hairy eagle. Its graceful figure is commonly used as a heraldic emblem, and also for standards and emblematic devices.

THE AUTUMN OF LIFE.

Dear heart, the fields are growing brown;
Mysterious sounds I hear—
Faint voices calling down the wind:
'Tis autumn of the year.

A splendor rare the trees put on,
Along the hills and vales;
Bright crimson shrouds from their gay robes
Are flying in the gales.

The robin trills a broken song,
The dew is chill and prey;
Dim purple moraines slowly dawn:
Night hurries on the day.

We've reached the sombre downs of life,
Where woods and woods are sore;
'Tis autumn of our lives, dear heart,
And autumn of the year.

'Tis voices from the flowery heights
Of youth—long left behind—
That evermore are calling me
Adown the autumn wind.

I know o'er yonder quiet hills
Are meadows green and fair,
Where daisies glow with bloom, and larks
Are singing in the air.

The way is very short, dear heart:
Our rest is very near;
Soon fadeless spring shall bless our lives,
And crown an endless year.

C. F. L. W.

M. M.—It is seemly that we should allow the faults of the dead to drop, by silence, into forgetfulness, and that we should speak lovingly and truthfully of their merits; but we agree with you that to pronounce panegyrics upon them that are knowingly undeserved, merely because they have passed away from us, is casting a contempt on truth which will not be borne with impunity.

INQUIRER.—The stupendous works erected by the early Peruvians, which have recently been found by travellers, must give us a high opinion of the state of civilisation which existed in that country several hundred years ago. The large aqueducts, the building of reservoirs by the erection of dams, the careful cultivation of the land and the manifold uses which they found for their products, all tend to prove that ancient Peru was in almost every respect far superior to the Peru of the present day.

FANNY.—Do not be anxious concerning the possibility of not finding a proper person as a husband. We think every lady so disposed has the chance, at some period in her life, to get married, though any effort on her part to hasten that desirable opportunity will be likely to frustrate it. Exercise ladylike dignity, but do not be cold and reserved towards your gentlemen friends. There would be nothing improper in asking any gentleman you have a liking for to call on you. You are still young, and need have no fear of dying an old maid.

B. R.—1. Bridal presents are sent from one to two weeks previous to the day of the marriage ceremony. They are always sent to the bride, and are most commonly some article of jewellery or plate, although there is no law in regard to this matter. 2. The lady should acknowledge the receipt of the present immediately, with sincere, yet not too extravagant thanks. 3. In sending a present in the manner described, enclose a short note expressing your pleasure in hearing of the coming event, and the hope that her married life may be a blissful one.

K. R. B.—William Banting, the author of a pamphlet on corpulence, was a London merchant. He was born in 1797, and died in 1871. Under the guidance of William Harvey, a London surgeon, his weight was reduced from 282 lbs. on August 26, 1862, to 156 lbs. on September 12, 1863, and to 160 lbs. in April, 1864, which latter weight he regarded as appropriate to his age and stature five feet five inches. He abstained from all farinaceous, saccharine, or oily matter, and especially avoided the use of bread, pastry, potatoes, butter, milk,

beer, port wine, champagne, pork, herrings, eels, salmon, and the like, and partook of lean meat, poultry, game, fruit, dry toast, good claret, dry sherry, madeira, and green vegetables, except parsnips, beets, turnips, and carrots. Soft-boiled eggs and cheese he indulged in to a moderate extent. He had for many years tried various expedients to reduce himself, but every form of bodily exercise and medicinal remedies failed. His prescriptions did not originate with himself. They are almost identical with those of Brillat Savarin, a French author and magistrate, whose book on gastronomy, entitled "Physiologie du Gout," was published in 1825.

M. B.—Sir Samuel Cunard, the founder of the famous line of steamers bearing his name, was born in 1787, at Halifax, Nova Scotia, where his father, a French-Canadian, had settled. Early in life he became a successful merchant and shipowner. He had long thought of establishing a line of steamers between England and America, and having obtained a contract from the English government for the mail service, built four steamers. The first passage was that of the *Britannia*, in 1840. He was made a baronet in 1859, and died at London, April 23, 1865.

T. R.—1. A very simple method of ridding yourself of the blackheads or fleshworms is by placing a watch key over each worm, and pressing gently, when it will come out in the barrel of the key; or by a gentle pressure between the nails of the opposite fingers, followed by the use of warm water and soap. Either of these methods may be followed by the daily application of a lotion composed of thirty-six grains of subcarbonate of soda dissolved in eight ounces of distilled water, and perfumed with six drachms of essence of roses. 2. We do not charge anything for answering the queries of correspondents, but are always willing to oblige them to the best of our ability.

ELLA W.—A judicious wife is always nipping off from her husband's moral nature little twigs that are growing in wrong directions. She keeps him in shape by constant pruning, without letting him see she is doing it. If he declares he will do some absurd thing, she will find some means of preventing him from doing it. The wisest things a man commonly does are those which his wife counsels him to do. Whenever you find a man oddly dressed, or talking absurdly, or exhibiting eccentricity of manner, you may be pretty sure that he is not a married man. The worst way to manage a man is to be always telling him of his faults.

R. D. F.—In the game of chess, a pawn is the only one of the forces which goes out of his direction to capture, and which has not the advantage of moving backwards; but it has one remarkable privilege by which, on some occasions, it becomes invaluable—that is, whenever it reaches the extreme square of the file on which it travels, it is invested with the title and assumes the power of any superior piece, except the king, which the player chooses. From this circumstance it sometimes happens that one party, by managing his pawns skillfully, contrives to have two, and sometimes three, queens on the board at once, which, as you are doubtless aware, is an irresistible combination of force.

MERCY WYNN.—Thomas Hood wrote the poem which contains the following stanza:

"Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied—
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died."

The poem is a short one, and is entitled "The Dying Bed." We copy at your request the first verse:

"We watched her breathing through the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her heart the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro."

G. M. M.—1. In France an engagement is an affair of negotiation and business. As soon as a young girl graduates from school her parents look out for a suitable husband for her, and, as a rule, their will is hers. If she has no positive dislike to the gentleman, she acquiesces, and the marriage contract is then duly signed. In very few cases, if at all, are engaged couples left alone, and they usually go to the altar with scarcely more than a few weeks' acquaintance. Said a young French lady to her friends, "I am glad we are to take a journey: I shall thus get a chance to know something about my husband before we return to society; at present he is quite a stranger to me." 2. French parents think it very indiscreet to allow the affection of a girl to be much interested before marriage, lest the engagement for some reason or other be broken off. 3. His full name was Robert Edward Lee.

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